



# Confusion over council mergers are still high

## • Amalgamations

**BY ANDREA DOWNEY AND HAMISH HASTIE**

Member for Victoria Park Ben Wyatt called on the Government to come clean on its plans for the Burswood peninsula.

Mr Wyatt said Premier Colin Barnett should let the community know whether they had decided to remove the peninsula from the Town of Victoria Park in the event of amalgamations.

In an interview with 720 ABC last week Mr Barnett agreed with City of Perth Lord Mayor Lisa Scaffidi's ideas on the Burswood peninsula being incorporated into the city.

"I think the City of Perth is the central business district," he said.

"I don't see it as taking in large suburban areas but some of the sort of iconic features of Perth should be in the City of Perth," he said.

Mr Wyatt said the loss of the peninsula would be detrimental to Victoria Park.

"The Premier's endorsement last week of the City of Perth proposal to steal the Town of Victoria Park's largest ratepayer, Crown, by taking over the Burswood peninsula is a serious threat to the quality and provision of services in my local community," he said.

"The threatened loss of over 14 per cent of the town's \$100 million budget will either result in higher rates or service cuts for ratepayers.

"What difference does it make to Crown, or the people of WA, to have Burswood in the City of Perth?

"The only consequence of such a change would be to slash the revenue base of the Town of Victoria Park and a cut in the quality of life for local residents."

Minister for Local Government Tony Simpson said nothing had been ruled in or out on whether major landmarks including Burswood would be incorporated in a broader City of Perth.

"Talk of local government reform has been around for some years now, so we need to be decisive," he said. "As a former local government councillor myself I have strong confidence in the local government sector and we are committed to supporting them through any changes.

"This won't happen overnight so we have a long

process ahead of us."

Mayors and chief executives from all local governments met with Mr Simpson last week to discuss amalgamations.

Town of Victoria mayor Trevor Vaughan said Mr Simpson was supportive of the joint amalgamations taskforce the town had developed with the City of South Perth.

"The minister acknowledged the significance of the Burswood peninsula to the town's viability, present and future and indicated that he did not want to damage the town's viability," he said.

Mr Vaughan said Mr Simpson also acknowledged the Swan River was a natural boundary.

City of Canning commissioner Linton Reynolds said if Victoria Park and South Perth lost the Burswood peninsula and were merged with Canning then Canning would have to pick up the slack.

"Obviously any changes in the boundaries would mean that to provide the same level of services the Canning rates would have to go up," he said.

"I have flagged to the minister that I am happy to talk about boundary adjustments once he has his basic framework in place.

"At this stage the minister isn't indicating anything to do with the future of Canning."

Ms Scaffidi said the city believed the Government should take a long-term and holistic approach to local government restructuring.

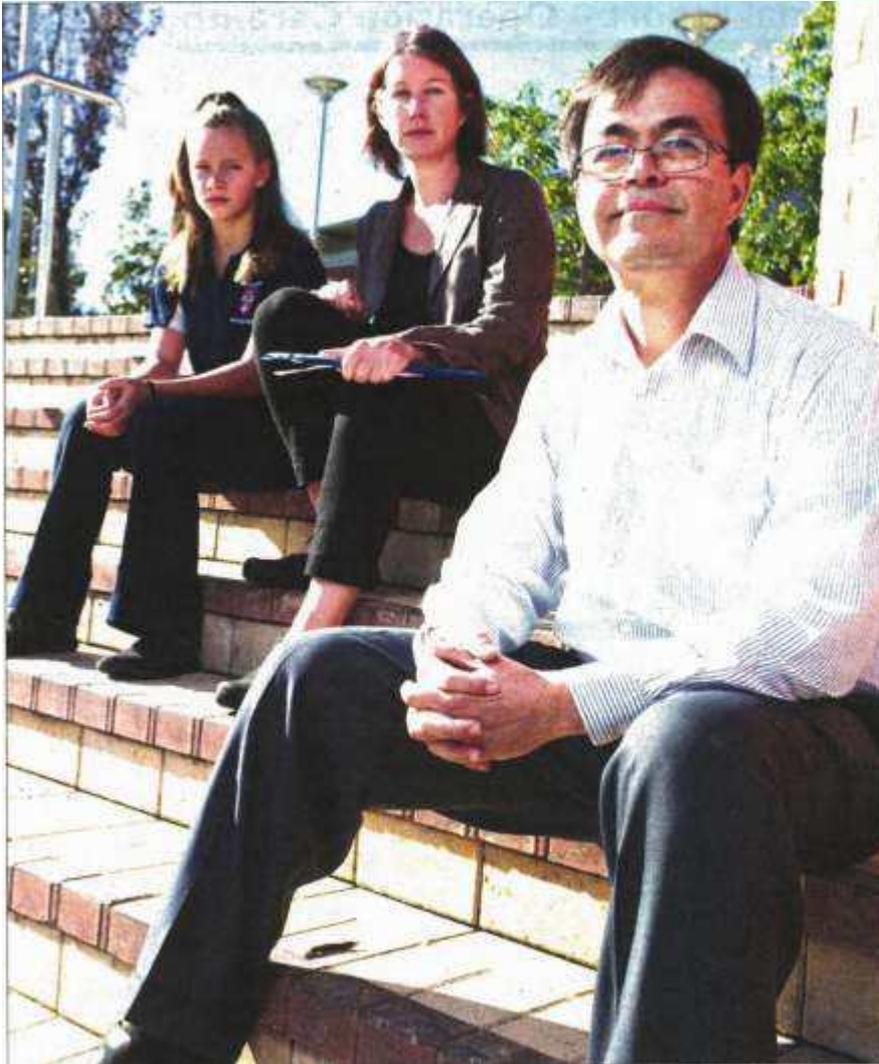
"Think about the Burswood peninsula in 10 or 20 years time when fully developed," she said.

"The future communities of interest between the CBD and Burswood will be much stronger than the current communities of interest."

Founder of facebook group called Save the Town of Victoria Park Stefanie Kimberley said residents did not want to merge with the City of Perth.

"We're not part of Perth, we are across the river from Perth and it's a strong dividing line," she said.

"I value my community and I think that Victoria Park is a really great place at the moment."



*Concerned Victoria Park residents Katharina Schweizer, Stefanie Kimberley and Paul Gillbanks would rather council boundaries stay the same. Photograph — Matt Devlin.*