

# AMALGAMATION

## WEST BUSSELTON AND BUSSELTON MUNICIPALITY

To Owners of Land in West Busselton and Land adjoining Bussell Highway as far west as the Vasse Turn-off.

At the unanimous request of members of the Busselton Municipal Council, I am making an appeal to you to vote "YES" on Saturday next, June 15th, 1946, for the amalgamation of West Busselton with the Busselton Municipality.

As pointed out in the pamphlet already issued to you, the Council urged the Sussex Road Board to issue a joint statement to all owners of land concerned in the amalgamation. Unfortunately the Board would not agree, but, after waiting for the Council's pamphlet to be distributed, in turn sent out a pamphlet in reply to the one issued by the Council, and in this made some incorrect and misleading statements which my Council feel should be refuted. Some more rather wild statements were made at the public debate on the amalgamation, which showed that the Road Board had not gone very carefully into the subject under discussion.

Had the Board and Council submitted a joint statement, it would have been unnecessary to forward this further pamphlet to you. It was agreed between the two bodies that **only one meeting would be held** to discuss the proposition, but notwithstanding this the Road Board called a meeting of **Ratepayers of West Busselton** for Saturday, June 8th, at 3 p.m.

Members of my Council, not being ratepayers in West Busselton, were naturally unable to attend this meeting or take part in any debate on the amalgamation. The Board's attitude in this matter is resented.

### THE ROAD BOARD'S PAMPHLET.

The Board claims that the Busselton Municipality is too small to be run economically, and suggests as an alternative that it should absorb the Municipality.

As pointed out, Busselton was a Town Trust from 1855 to 1871 when it became a Municipality, and has always been in a position to finance in an economical manner its requirements. The Council's suggestion to incorporate within the municipal boundaries the area suggested, would make Busselton one of the biggest municipalities in Western Australia.

### BUSSELTON HOSPITAL CONTRIBUTIONS.

The Road Board endeavoured to point out that its country members were always willing to play their part in matters of common interest to town and country residents, and gave as an instance the fact that some years ago the Board paid 60 per cent and the Council only 40 per cent of a contribution to extensions of the Busselton Hospital. It was also suggested that as the Board is not allowed to contribute to any works outside its area, it should annex the Municipality and so be in a position to assist in these matters of common interest.

It is obvious the Board **can**, with special permission, contribute to works, etc., outside its area, otherwise it would have been unable to make the contribution to the hospital. The fact, however, remains that the Board at that time was unwilling to make any contribution to the hospital, and it was only after pressure being brought to bear that it eventually agreed.

Of the total number of people served by the Busselton Hospital, there was 73 per cent in the Road Board area and only 27 per cent in the Municipality, and the Council suggested a contribution on that basis, but in order to make certain of raising the money required, it had to compromise by paying 40 per cent.

This shows the difficulty of getting the Board to work in with the Municipality even on such an important matter as a hospital.

### TOWN HALL.

The Road Board claims that if it absorbs the Municipality, the outlying country centres can be rated to help pay for a civic centre in Busselton. My Council considers that the country wards would quite rightly strongly object to being rated for such a purpose, particularly as in most cases they have had to build halls for themselves in their various centres without any assistance from the town.

The Busselton Council has plans for a modern civic centre in Busselton, and it hopes to raise the main portion of the money required by the disposal of several valuable blocks of land which it owns.



The proposed centre is to be in the form of a memorial hall, and it is felt that some country people may agree to **voluntarily** support such a building project, but it would be most unfair to rate them for a building that would be used mainly by the townspeople.

### **ELECTRICITY SUPPLY.**

The Board by inference criticises the Council for making a profit out of its Electric Light Department. At the debate on June 4th it was pointed out that not only did the Council provide an excellent electricity service for both the Municipality and West Busselton, but it supplied it at a much lower price than other towns in the South-West of a similar size, towns which in most cases had given a concession to a private firm to supply electric current. The towns concerned received a paltry £10 per annum for the concession, whereas the Busselton Council was showing a profit of about £1200 per annum, notwithstanding the lower price to consumers.

The Board also tried to claim that the Council was making a huge profit out of the sale of electricity to West Busselton. Actually the overall average cost per unit generated is about 4½d., and the Sussex Road Board is supplied at 4½d. per unit in bulk, and is given a further rebate of 1d. per unit on any rebates it gives to its consumers who use over 20 units per month for power.

Last year the Road Board actually made a profit on the resale of electricity to its consumers of £229. This profit went into a fund to reduce the debt on the unfortunate loss the Board made when it decided to break away from the Council's electricity supply and instal a plant of its own.

### **LACK OF AMENITIES IN WEST BUSSELTON.**

The Board claims that it has the same powers as the Council to provide West Busselton with amenities, and my Council agrees, but although the Board has the power, it apparently has not the same incentive, and although it is claimed that West Busselton was not a prescribed area until 1928, the area was fairly closely settled for some years before that date.

While the Council admits that little could be done in the way of water service, etc., during the war years, **the Board had many years before the war** in which to make the necessary move.

### **OUTSIDE INFLUENCE OF COUNTRY WARDS.**

The Board does not attempt in any way to deny that West Busselton is entirely subject to the will of the country members, except to refer to the Council as "bringing into view the old Bogey Man." The fact remains that whatever the Board may state, West Busselton has only 2 members out of 9 sitting on the Board, and the lack of ANY AMENITIES supplied by the Board in West Busselton speaks for itself.

### **WATER SCHEME.**

The Board claims that it made some inquiries about a water scheme for West Busselton about 4 years ago (right in the middle of World War II when materials and manpower were not available). It was admitted at the debate that nothing had been done since and, that notwithstanding a request from the West Busselton Progress Association, it had not approached the Council to ascertain if it could supply West Busselton with water, claiming it "thought" the Council had insufficient water available. Actually the Council may be able to supply West Busselton with water at very little expense apart from the cost of piping.

The Board's suggestion that the Council has not sufficient water for its own requirements is refuted, but if necessary the Council would put a new bore down in the West Busselton area.

The reference to the fact that all residents in the Municipality are not connected with the water scheme is correct, but is inclined to be misleading. Only about half a dozen houses are not connected and these will be served as soon as piping is available.

Reference was made at the debate to the fact that the Council incorrectly stated that Manjimup had no water scheme, and it is desired to apologise for this unfortunate error. The mistake was due to the fact that the vice-chairman of the Manjimup Road Board recently inspected the Busselton Water Works, and it was incorrectly assumed that his Board was considering putting in a water scheme. Actually the inspection was to inquire into a special booster operating in the Busselton Water Board—an arrangement practically unique in W.A. which keeps the town supply at a constant high pressure.

### **SEWERAGE.**

While the Road Board agrees with the Council that a sewerage scheme would be better than the present filthy pan method of disposal, it obviously has given the matter no thought and raised points against it. As pointed out in the Council's previous pamphlet, the cost of the Northam sewerage scheme was £44,000, and was financed on a £ for £ subsidy basis from the Government.

Northam's scheme serves over twice the population and about double the area that the Busselton scheme would serve, and sinking for the sewer pipes was in hard rocky soil, whereas the sinking for pipes in Busselton would be in sand. While it is admitted that costs have risen since the Northam scheme was installed, it is considered that the estimate of £40,000 for the Busselton scheme would allow an ample surplus for increased costs.



Since the previous pamphlet was issued, the Council suggested to the Minister in Charge of Local Government (Hon. E. H. Gray, M.L.C.) that the Commonwealth Government be asked to assist the Busselton Council on a £ for £ basis, on the understanding that ex-servicemen unemployed at the time be given work on the scheme. Mr. Gray is very enthusiastic about the scheme and has promised to approach both State and Commonwealth Governments on the basis outlined.

It has already been pointed out that if the scheme can be put in for £40,000 it would not cost the ratepayers any more than they are paying at present. It is, therefore, evident that if a £ for £ subsidy is granted it will cost householders only about half (30/- a year), which sum would provide for both interest and sinking fund so that the liability would be diminishing all the time. A sewerage scheme will attract more people to Busselton, and **each extra home connected would reduce the average cost.**

The Board endeavoured to "throw cold water" on the scheme by making extravagant statements about the cost of connection to the scheme, suggesting up to £60 in its pamphlet and up to £84 at the debate.

The connection costs would depend on the distance the home was away from the sewerage pipes and the digging needed. It should be remembered that the complete cost today of putting in a septic tank system is only about £30, and this includes an impervious sump, lavatory pan, flushing system, lavatory and French drain. It is, therefore obvious that the Board's claim is out of all reason.

At the debate the Board suggested that the sewage should be run out to sea. The Council is against such a suggestion as it is considered that it may pollute our excellent beach, and favours a sewerage farm on the same principle as Northam (produce from the Northam farm pays the attendant's wages).

### SYSTEM OF RATING.

It would appear that the Board is trying to confuse the issue by quoting a hypothetical case of a block in its area valued at £40 **unimproved** with one in the Municipality on the **annual value** of £52. Actually one cannot make a comparison between valuations on the different systems. But if one tried, why not compare one on £40 per annum annual value with one of £100 on the unimproved value system—they would work out on the same basis.

The fact remains that the Council is in favour of the present system of rating in the Road Board area, and even if the rates were risen to the maximum it would not make more than 5/- extra per annum to the average householder in West Busselton on present values. Incidentally the Road Board openly stated that even if West Busselton remained under its control the rates would probably be increased in the near future.

### REPRESENTATION IN NEW COUNCIL.

Whatever the Road Board may suggest, the Council will urge the Minister in Charge of Local Government to give **EQUAL REPRESENTATION** to West Busselton in the enlarged Municipality, and on a population and area basis this request is unlikely to be refused.

### PRESENT LOANS.

The statement made by the Board that the present loan indebtedness of the Council is over £10,000 **IS INCORRECT**. It is assumed that this statement was made with a view to suggesting that the Council was in a state verging on bankruptcy. It was refuted at the debate and full details are quoted here. Briefly, the position is that the total loan indebtedness of the Council is £7,550, plus £833 overdraft on the general account. The Council has, however credits on the Electricity, Water Board, Health and Cemetery Boards, plus War Bonds, etc., to the extent of £5779, making an actual monetary deficit of only £2604. If we also add to the Council's **ACTUAL CASH RESOURCES** the Pries Bequest of £2000 and £250 in a No. 2 A/c for the improvement of the recreation ground, it will be seen that the cash position practically balances. This is a totally different position to the one the Road Board would have you assume—a difference of £10,000.

Against this the Council has assets by way of electric light and water department plant, mains etc., real estate improvements, roads and footpaths, plus the Pries' bequest of £2000 totalling between £40,000 and £50,000. There is probably no local governing body in W.A. in such a good financial position.

West Busselton on the other hand has a loan outstanding of £1400, and a deficit with the Road Board's electric light department of over £800, actually a total monetary deficit of over £2900. While the Municipality has over £40,000 worth of assets, the West Busselton assets consist only of a few roads (mostly not bitumenised), a very short length of footpaths and an 11 per cent share in the Road Road office building. (Bussell Highway is maintained by the Main Roads Department, NOT by the Sussex Road Board).

### SAVING IF MUNICIPALITY JOINED SUSSEX ROAD BOARD?

The Board claims that if it absorbed the Municipality, there would be £250 saved on salaries. It, however, gives no details as to how this saving would be effected. At present the secretary of the Road Board admits that he is overworked, and the Town Clerk is certainly fully occupied, and even if the Municipality agreed to go into the Road Board (which is most unlikely) both men would be required.



## FARMERS IN THE NEW MUNICIPALITY.

The Council's reply to the Board's remarks on this subject is that there are farmers in the **present Municipality**, who do not find the rates too high. They are rated on the basis of farm lands.

## DUPLICATE SERVICES.

The sorry attempts of the Sussex Road Board to run West Busselton as a separate town should be remembered by West Busselton ratepayers on June 15th.

Let it not be forgotten that in spite of advice to the contrary, the Board insisted on installing its own electric light station, when it could have continued to get an excellent and continuous supply from the Municipality at the same price per unit as the residents of Busselton were paying. After running this plant in a sorry manner, and for a great portion of the time with the electricity supply cut off during certain periods of the day, the plant eventually broke down, leaving the ratepayers saddled with a heavy loss.

This is in marked contrast to the efficient and profitable running of the Municipal powerhouse.

Another duplication of the Council's amenities is the West Busselton recreation ground, which, it is understood, cost the ratepayers £300 to clear and has now been allowed to become overgrown with wattles to a height of 10 feet. Why it was considered necessary to have another recreation ground at all is beyond the comprehension of most of us.

As a result of the Road Board's attempts at duplicating the services provided efficiently by the Municipality, West Busselton Ward has LOST HEAVILY, with the result that such an important road as Bussell Highway has not had anything spent on it by the Board for many years. The only improvement actually done in this street by the Board is a short footpath near the Board's office. The road itself was built and is maintained by the Main Roads Department.

The ratepayers in West Busselton should remember the way their money has been WASTED, and take advantage of the referendum to vote "YES" for the transfer of their business to the Municipality, thus making sure of equal representation free from outside interference in a United Busselton.

## POSTAL VOTING.

A voting paper is being posted to all absentee owners with instructions. My Council hopes that you will vote "YES" on this important move for a united Busselton, but it asks you to exercise your right to vote whatever your opinion may be. These papers should be in your hands by now, but if you have not received yours yet, please either telegraph or telephone (phone 9) the Town Clerk, Busselton, and he will arrange for your paper to be posted. If you are likely to be away on polling day (June 15th) you can arrange with the Road Board Secretary to use an absentee voting paper; but please remember that all postal votes must be at the Road Board office, Busselton, by not later than Saturday afternoon, 15th June, 1946.

On the voting papers sent to you, you are asked to put a "X" in the square opposite to the answer you favour. I ask you to put a "X" opposite the word "YES."

Yours faithfully,

B. K. KILLERBY,

Mayor of Busselton.

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## AN UNBIASSED OPINION FROM A MAN WHO UNDERSTANDS LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

The Minister in Charge of Local Government (Hon. E. H. Gray, M.L.C.) personally told me that he hoped that the Municipality would be successful in this referendum, as he considered that a town of the size of Busselton should not be divided, and that it should govern its own affairs free from the influence of outside country members.

The Hon. Mr. Gray, in his capacity as Minister, should know more than anyone else about the pitfalls of divided control. As he is anxious for West Busselton to join the Municipality, he has given me permission to quote him. The Council also forwarded him a copy of its first pamphlet, and invited him to be present at the debate. His telegraphed reply was as follows:—

**B. K. KILLERBY,  
MAYOR,  
BUSSELTON.**

REGRET unable to attend meeting stop Congratulations on very clear unchallengeable case for unity set out in your pamphlet which I have read with interest stop Busselton with one local authority will have wonderful opportunity for rapid developments stop Wish your Council success in referendum.—GRAY,

MINISTER IN CHARGE LOCAL GOVERNMENT.