

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

475. Mr F.A. ALBAN to the Minister for Local Government:

Now that the federal election has passed, we turn our attention to the local government elections, which take place next month. Can the minister inform the house why these local government elections are very important?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON replied:

I thank the member for Swan Hills for the question. He is right; this year is very unusual because there are three elections this year—the state government elections in March; last weekend, the federal election; and next month, on 19 October, the local government elections. Nominations are open at the moment for the 138 local governments in Western Australia for people to become councillors.

I took a quick look around the chamber and I think I am right that 10 or 11 members on this side are ex-councillors. The member for Swan Hills, who asked the question; the members for Belmont and Hillarys; the member for Dawesville—in his younger days at the City of Bayswater—the members for Wanneroo, Vasse, Moore, Bunbury, Ocean Reef, Hillarys; and, of course, you, Mr Speaker. All 11 ex-councillors make fine members of Parliament.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

A government member: And you.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: And me; very true. That is a good point.

The point I am trying to make is that local government is a very good training ground and opportunity for people to get into politics. I encourage everyone in their community to put up their hand and get involved in their local government election. It is a great platform from which to get involved with the community. If residents have the skills and the resolve, I encourage them to become involved in their local government elections.

Most importantly, this is a very interesting and exciting time in the metropolitan area due to the local government reform process. The new councillors elected in October will have an opportunity to help shape the new councils as they move forward through the reform process. Although their terms of two years will be shorter, the reality is that this format will provide stronger local governments. The other most important issue is that people vote in the local government elections. The rate of voter turnout is very low; in fact, it is only a little bit higher than the Labor Party rate last weekend of 29 per cent. It is important that people exercise their democratic right to vote in the upcoming local government elections. It is very important that good councillors come on board and I encourage everyone to get involved in the process.