

MYCOUNCIL WEBSITE — CITY OF BAYSWATER

**379. Mr I.M. BRITZA to the Minister for Local Government:**

Before asking my question, I want to acknowledge the students in the public gallery from the Geraldton Senior College, in the electorate of the member for Geraldton.

I have been interested to see how the City of Bayswater's finances compare with those of local governments around it, especially using the recently launched MyCouncil website. Could the minister update the house on how my community, and also community members, can access this site and gain the advantage of it?

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON replied:**

I thank the member for Morley for his question and his interest in his local government. The member is referring to the MyCouncil webpage that was launched last month. It has been a fantastic tool for ratepayers and the community as a whole to see how their local governments are operating. It is a very good tool, especially right now as we head into a rate rise coming up with budgets being set by local governments and rate notices being calculated with their differential rates. There is an opportunity for ratepayers to go onto the webpage and see where their money is being spent. They can quite clearly see everything to do with roads, rates, rubbish and, more importantly, governance.

The webpage has been accessed by over 76 000 people; close to 500 people a day are clicking on the website to have a look. It is interesting to see the demographics of those looking, and the areas they come from. The member for Mandurah would be interested to know that over 1 200 people from his electorate have clicked on the City of Mandurah to have a look.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** They were all me!

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** There you are—the member has been working hard!

More importantly, the member as an ex-councillor would know that it is very important to be able to keep an eye on this to make sure it is comparative with where we need to be. Local government is big business. Last year, \$1.9 billion in rates was collected by 138 local governments—just under \$2 billion of ratepayer money was collected. That is big business. Local governments look after \$40 billion worth of assets and employ 16 000 full-time staff. The important part is that ratepayers have access to information about where their rates are being spent, and how much of their money is being put into wages, employment and so forth. An important part of what we are trying to do here is ensure accountability and transparency of local governments on where their money is being spent. It is important to also keep in mind the \$280 million that comes through the financial assistance grants that help out local governments in their day-to-day running. There is much talk about what the grants commission gives to local governments to make sure that we can keep them sustainable.

Member for Morley, from the perspective of the City of Bayswater, 37 per cent of its operating budget, or just over \$27 million, is spent on recreation and culture, including community halls, recreation centres, libraries and parks, and 15 per cent, or just over \$11 million, on education and welfare, including services to children and youth services. It is a very good local government, and the member for Morley can be very proud of it. More importantly, I cannot emphasise enough that this is a time for local governments to have a look at what their community needs are, and make sure they are reflective. We are looking at the moment at a consumer price index rise of just under two per cent. The local government index is 0.7 per cent, which is the cost of doing business for local governments. The increase in costs of materials, wages and labour is 0.7 per cent on the sector this year, so I am making sure that local governments reflect that in their rate increases this year as they move forward, and ratepayers have access to a webpage that explains where their money is going. It is an opportunity for them to ask questions about how their money is being spent.