

MACHINERY-OF-GOVERNMENT CHANGES

64. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question.

How confident is the Premier that these failures are not systemic throughout the public service? They are serious matters that have been raised by the Auditor General and revelations by one of his own directors general.

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I indicated to the former member that notice should be provided if she wants specific details about a specific report, but I understand that the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries is looking to implement the recommendations of the Auditor General's inquiry to put in place any changes that might be needed out of that. The machinery-of-government changes have now been in place for four years. From the tone of the Leader of the Opposition's questioning, we should just have more government departments—more and more and more. Maybe we should have 100 government departments! That might solve the problem, according to the Leader of the Opposition. Every time you have an issue, you create a government department. How many government departments do you want?

Ms M.J. Davies: We are just saying your model does not work, Premier. Your model is failing.

Mr M. McGOWAN: What new members will learn is that whenever we pose a question to them, they never have an answer. We have 25 government departments, which is a 40 per cent reduction. I think we will find that most people across the state would say that it is better to have larger and more robust organisations that bring together synergies between important areas of government. Most people would think that is a reasonable thing to do. That is what our reforms have done. As I said, Jeff Kennett condensed the entire Victorian government into eight departments. We have condensed the number of Western Australian government departments—our state has a third of the population of Victoria—from 41 down to 25. Obviously, under the arrangement that was there before—there had been no reform for decades—it was too many. I think the synergies between the agencies are plain for all to see and the way that they are structured is obviously a sensible way forward. Perhaps we could have gone further with some departments. We elected not to because we thought that in the biggest reorganisation in government, perhaps in history, it was probably wise to stop at about 25. It is plain from what the Leader of the Opposition has to say that she thinks that there should be an unlimited number of government departments, and all that does is breed small agencies without great capability, more people in administration and fewer people in delivery.