

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — AMALGAMATIONS — PROPOSED RALLY

**244. MR N.W. MORTON to the Minister for Local Government:**

I am aware that a rally is proposed to be held tonight on the steps of Parliament House by an alliance of mayors and shire presidents.

**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Bassendean, I call you to order for the second time.

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** I will continue with my question.

Can the minister please outline the Liberal–National government’s reaction to the rally at this point of the reform process?

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

I thank the member for Forrestfield for his question. He is right; there will be a rally tonight on the steps of Parliament House and it should be good to see some members of the community come out. However, from my perspective, it is interesting that it is at a time when we have been trying to work through this reform, since I have been the minister, for over 12 months. I will go into a bit of history. When I first met with the mayors, presidents and CEOs in July last year, I explained the process of where we were at. I asked them to go through the process and put in a proposal. On that date last year, I told them that if they did not put in a proposal, I would put one in for them. I made that very clear from day one as we went through this process. Interestingly, going back through a bit of history, for those who do not understand, a “Systemic Sustainability Study” report was done on the sustainability of local government in 2006. That was the report that started this whole process back in 2006 —

Several members interjected.

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** It was done by the Western Australian Local Government Association as well; that is a very good point, Minister for Planning. That is where it all started. The report identified that 83 metropolitan councils were unsustainable into the future. That is where it all started. It is interesting that local governments can write to every ratepayer right now explaining the process about what is going to happen —

**Mr D.A. Templeman** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Mandurah, I call you to order for the second time.

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** However, the local governments did not write to their ratepayers back in 2006 when the SSS report came out and they did not write to tell them about the Robson report, which wanted the number of local governments to go down to nine. It is only now, at the eleventh hour, that they are writing to their constituents to try to scaremonger amongst them, making statements about libraries and swimming pools that will disappear, which are just blatant lies. That will not happen. The most important thing to realise —

**Mr D.A. Templeman** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Mandurah!

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** Building local governments in turn makes the capacity for them to deliver the services that they need to deliver. As I stand here today, up to 36 proposals are before the Local Government Advisory Board. I restate that the process now is in the hands of the advisory board. The Local Government Advisory Board is going through the process of meeting with all the local governments. In a report that will come out in July, the advisory board will make a recommendation to me as the minister about the best outcome for local government to move forward. I have to restate that this is in the hands of the advisory board; I have no more input into this process. It is an independent advisory board and I cannot change or amend it. I can only accept or reject the report.

I look forward to the rally tonight and to go and see the community out there. However, the most important thing is to try to build local governments that are more sustainable in the future. It is this government that has had the guts to go out and do some reform, unlike the opposition that sat on it. What is the opposition’s commitment to reform? Are members opposite for reform?

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** Last night I went to Fremantle to go to Rottnest Island. On the way down in the car, I was listening to talkback radio on the ABC. A former Premier said that the Labor Party has to find a new direction and platform. He spoke about a number of things—the new frontier, a new age, and how the party has to look

forward. This reform process is about that, members, so I will ask them about the process. This is about reform and it is about the direction of local government, and they need to be on board with it.

**The SPEAKER:** Further questions? Member for Carine—no, sorry; I will come back to you, member.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** The member has agreed for the opposition to get the call. Member for Collie—Preston.