

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT — REVIEW

536. Mr D.R. MICHAEL to the Minister for Local Government:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's review of the Local Government Act and its commitment to strengthening the sector. Can the minister update the house on this review and how the first stage of reforms will deliver a modern Local Government Act that meets community expectations?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

I want to thank the member for Balcatta for his question and I also want to thank him for chairing the working party that is progressing the review of the Local Government Act. It was a major election commitment by the McGowan government and focuses on ensuring that we have a modern enabling legislation for a very important sector of government in this state, which, of course, is local government. I thank the member for Balcatta for his question and for his leadership of that stakeholder group.

I was very pleased to announce at the Western Australian Local Government Association convention earlier this month a range of important measures, which I will bring to the Parliament through legislation in the coming months, focused on the first phase of key reform. The first phase focuses on addressing the issue of gifts and transparency around gifts with regard to elected local councillors, making sure that there is a clear and simple process in place for that to be transparent and accountable. We have a proposal for universal training. It is an issue that was played with by those opposite but we are going to deliver. It is a universal training regime that focuses on three key elements, the first being that candidates—people who wish to put themselves forward to be elected to a local council—will have their eyes wide open in terms of a process that enables them to understand what role they are seeking to become involved in. The second part of that will be a universal training regime for newly elected councillors so that they have a universal understanding of the modern demands of being an elected councillor in a municipality throughout the state. It will include aspects of financial management, understanding the issues of governance, understanding the importance of the decision-making process, and what their key role is in that process. In the legislation that I will bring forward we also will be focusing on a mandatory code of conduct for all council members and candidates. Again, it will be a focus on the behaviour and the responsibility that they have as an elected council member. We will address issues around CEO recruitment, selection, performance review, termination, and minimum standards for local government CEO recruitment. We want the best CEOs in place in the 130-plus councils across the state, and so we will focus on that. We will ensure that people in their communities have ready access to the information that they want. We will have requirements about having information online so that people can get that immediately. I am very keen to introduce this first phase of amendments to Parliament in the coming months and I hope that those opposite will support these measures, because I think they are important if we are to have a modern and effective local government system in Western Australia. Of course, a second phase is underway, under the guidance of the member for Balcatta, that focuses on a range of other important measures so that we end up with a modern piece of local government legislation that will improve and deliver quality local government to the people of Western Australia no matter where they live.