

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT — REVIEW

**646. Ms S.E. WINTON to the Minister for Local Government:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to review the outdated Local Government Act and the release today of the discussion paper outlining potential reforms. Why is reform needed and how will the discussion paper assist in ensuring that we have an effective and efficient local government sector?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:**

I thank the member for the question. I have just returned from the casino with my very good friend the shadow Minister for Local Government. I took him in the car.

Several members interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** You better declare that.

He was more interested in going off to the buffet afterwards and not keen to get back to question time! It is a very serious question and I thank the member for Wanneroo because she knows very well from her experience the importance of local government in Western Australia. She understands that Western Australia needs very, very robust local government. That means we need legislation that is clear, concise and agile and ensures that local government does what it needs to do for the benefit of ratepayers, residents and businesses in their communities. That is why, before the election, we committed to reviewing the Local Government Act. We recognised that a 20-plus-year-old act is tired and, indeed, is not delivering to a modern Western Australian community within the parameters of a modern Western Australian economy. I am pleased that at the Local Government Professionals WA Annual State Conference today I was able to officially launch the first phase of the consultation, which focuses on a number of key elements. We are inviting the community, stakeholders, individuals, ratepayers, councillors, elected members, people working in local government and people interested in making sure we have a robust local government sector to comment on it.

In the first phase of the consultation document, which I announced today, we are seeking feedback on a range of issues, including transparency and accountability; making sure there is clear definition of roles and responsibilities for elected members and staff; and making sure when we are talking about selection of chief executive officers there is a robust process focused on ensuring that happens. We also want to make sure we address the issue of gifts because we know that has been a clumsily handled process for some time that needs to be fixed. We are also encouraging feedback on enabling regional subsidiaries; that is, if two or more councils want to create an entity to deliver quality outcomes with a regional subsidiary, they will have the capacity to do so. We also want to make sure this is an involved process in which people can tell me and tell the government exactly what a modern local government needs to look like.

The first phase is out for consultation. I know the member will immediately read and comment on it. I invite all members to read the document, to comment and spread it among their constituencies asking for feedback. We want feedback on this within the time frame. We have that open until 9 February and, almost concurrently, the second phase will commence, which looks at a range of other important matters, including codes of conduct, issues around how we can create greater participation and ensure we get quality people putting themselves forward so they can make a quality contribution to their local government and, indeed, the community they seek to represent. It is a very important opportunity for Western Australia to come out with legislation at the end of this process that is enabling and agile and reflects the modern environment we are operating under and delivers quality to ratepayers, residents and businesses in local governments across the state and is modern legislation that effectively delivers quality to the people of Western Australia.