

CITY OF PERTH — SUSPENSION

381. Mr S.A. MILLMAN to the Minister for Local Government:

I refer to the recent suspension of the City of Perth elected members and the subsequent decision by the minister to appoint an inquirer.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how proper process was followed in the suspension?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house who exactly he takes advice from when deciding these matters?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

(1)–(2) Thank you very much, member for Mount Lawley. I appreciate his question and I certainly want to make sure that the house is very well aware of the seriousness of the decision to suspend the council of the City of Perth. I made this decision earlier this year that resulted ultimately in the appointment of three commissioners to oversee the elected responsibilities of that municipality as well as the appointment of a panel inquiry, which has powers of a royal commission to investigate the issues associated with the conduct and the operation of the City of Perth. It was interesting to read a number of articles, including an article in today's paper, about the comments attributed to the member for Carine. We all know that, unfortunately, the member for Carine does not have a grasp of not only the Local Government Act, but also how to approach the local government portfolio that he is responsible for. I am going to highlight an example of that shortly.

I want to assure the house that the process was very, very clearly followed under the jurisdiction of the Local Government Act. It is very important that that act is followed and that due process is followed. Of course, when a minister seeks to suspend a council, as I did, processes must be followed according to the act. Thresholds must be met and advice sought to do that. I read with great interest the member for Carine's comments and contributions in this house with regard to City of Perth matters, including comments made in this house in his response to the budget speech. The member has form in this area: he dumped on members of the public under parliamentary privilege. He uses parliamentary privilege to hide behind when he makes these comments. He has been asked for a public apology for one of his comments, which was made with respect to an eminent citizen of Western Australia and former Western Australian of the Year. Not only was that citizen offended by the member for Carine's comments; he demanded a public apology, and the member has not taken the opportunity to use this place to explain himself and make a public apology, as he should. There have been letters to his own leader requesting that an apology be made, and he has done nothing because he is gutless. He comes in here and uses parliamentary privilege, and then when he is found out and knows that he is wrong, he decides to impugn someone's reputation—a person who is a good citizen of Western Australia who was awarded Western Australian of the Year. The member for Carine has done nothing. Why does he not stand up after question time and use a personal explanation to make an apology. That is what should be expected. The Leader of the Opposition should be demanding that of his local government spokesperson.

Included in the comments made by this member were comments about supposed private meetings between people like suspended councillors Jemma Green and Reece Harley. It has been made very clear that there have been no private meetings. I have explained to the member that the meetings I have with people are formal meetings, including with suspended councillor Jemma Green while she was the acting Lord Mayor of Perth, in the context of the City of Perth Committee, as is required by statutory responsibility under the City of Perth legislation. He keeps coming in here and dumping on people and he has form. He did it to former councillors at Kalamunda. This is the way he operates. He does himself no service at all; he does himself a disservice. The sector knows he cannot be trusted and that he, in government, did nothing about local government. This government is reviewing the Local Government Act. This government is dealing with individual councillors through the legislation currently before the house. This government understands and trusts the overwhelming number of people in local government who are doing a good job, as was highlighted by the member for South Perth in his contribution in this house on that legislation only an hour or so ago.

The member for Carine needs to lift his game and the Leader of the Opposition needs to talk to his spokesperson for local government about using this house to impugn people, including eminent citizens who have made great contributions to this community. The Leader of the Opposition needs to make him make a public apology, as he was asked to do by the person he impugned.