

## PREMIER'S STATEMENT

### *Consideration*

Resumed from 17 February on the following question —

That the Premier's Statement be noted.

**MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition)** [12.33 pm]: I rise to respond to the Premier's Statement. We live in a wonderful state that has one-third of the nation's landmass and a fantastic climate. We sit in a time zone and a region that is one of the most exciting in the world. We comprise 11 per cent of the nation's population and we are the biggest state in the best country on earth. We have a small energetic population of 2.5 million out of a nation of 25 million people. We are all proud Australians and we are all proud Western Australians. We have a magnificent, if threatened, environment with deserts, forests, beautiful rivers, scrublands, an amazing coastline and reef systems. We are isolated, and that isolation of our capital city and our regional communities has bred self-reliance, pride in our achievements and, I think, care for our fellow citizens. We come from all corners of the world and from other states. We have a wonderful Indigenous population that has been here for tens of thousands of years. The diversity of our population is a strength. Indeed, I am one of them. This state has given me opportunities beyond my wildest imagination: a fantastic family, a great career, a great job, and a great community in which to live. Western Australians expect a lot of their governments, and they have every right to. They expect their governments to be competent, capable, stable and compassionate and to have a vision for the long-term future. I want a government, and I want to lead a government, that focuses on long-term planning to meet the long-term future needs of the people of Western Australia and on the provision of opportunity and services, irrespective of the wealth of the individuals receiving those services. I want a government that supports laws, or indeed opposes laws, to ensure the protection of fundamental liberties and to promote equality of opportunity. I want a government that looks after those in need, and ensures that in the great social experiment that is Western Australia, as far as we are able, no-one is left behind. I grew up with kids who were left behind in a regional town and who missed out on opportunities. As much as I can, I want to prevent that from happening in the future. I want a government that protects our beautiful and precious environment for the generations that will follow us, and a government that concentrates on economic success as the foundation of providing a decent society. For me, if I could encapsulate it, it is about providing about a stronger state and a better life for all. Strong economic management is required while making sure that everyone and, indeed, future generations, shares in the success of the state.

The year 2015 should be a time of immense optimism and hope. We have just come out of 10 years when the state's economic growth and success has been fuelled largely by the construction boom in China. Who would have thought that the urbanisation of China would have meant that such amazing things were possible in Western Australia with our economic success? So, 2015 and onwards should be a time of greater optimism and hope, but as I move throughout the community, I see the reality is that many people are concerned about and fear the future. Many people are overextended and worried about their financial position. They worry about how they will pay the mortgage, how they will meet the cost of living and whether they or their children will have a job in the future. For the first time in a very long time, unemployment and job security are real fears in the broader Western Australian community. Fly in, fly out families, small business people and ordinary working families are worried about their jobs and job security. The cost of living is hard for many people to bear, and many people are concerned about education and training for themselves and their children. Many families, particularly in the great suburban areas of our state, cannot understand why congestion on our roads is so rampant. We are at a crossroads in Western Australia. It should not be that way, but we are. We should be emerging from the Chinese economic boom and that period of prosperity in a great budgetary position and with a much more diverse economy that is able to withstand international shocks, but we are not. Optimism and hope should prevail throughout the community despite the issues surrounding the iron ore price and despite the slowdown in China, but it is not.

That brings me to the first subject I want to talk about, which is economic management in Western Australia. It was raised in the Premier's Statement yesterday, and I want to address some of the things that the Premier had to say. Over the break, the *Government Mid-year Financial Projections Statement* was released. It explained many things, including the budget position facing the state of Western Australia. If members turn to page 1, it shows that for the first time in 15 years this state will have an operating deficit of \$1.3 billion. It is the biggest operating deficit in the history of Western Australia. The second point I raise is contained on page 4 of the midyear statement. Members will see that total public sector debt in Western Australia has grown in this financial year to \$25.3 billion and by 2017–18 it is expected to grow to \$30.8 billion. These are serious issues. I will repeat what I have said before and I will keep repeating it. This government inherited the best set of books in the history of Western Australia and turned them into the worst set of books. This government inherited a AAA, gold-plated

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rating from international credit rating agencies, Standard and Poor's and Moody's Investors Service, and lost both ratings at a time of unparalleled revenue and economic success in Western Australia. It lost both of those international ratings. This government increased payroll tax and stamp duty and looks like increasing royalties at a time of receiving unparalleled revenue into its coffers. The Premier's excuses for this do not hold water. I want to go through the principal excuse that I heard yesterday.

The Premier said that the government built some capital works and had to borrow to do it. In the last 107 years of Western Australian history, governments built capital works and did not blow debt by 600 per cent. For 107 years, from 1901 to 2008, with all the infrastructure provided in this state—rail, ports, electricity and water, all the public buildings and all the community services—total public sector debt accumulated to \$3.6 billion. In the six years since this government was elected, public sector debt has climbed from \$3.6 billion to more than \$25 billion and within a few years it will be above \$30 billion. The Premier's excuse that somehow the circumstances confronting this government were different from those facing all the other state governments does not hold water. Charles Court, "Moo Cow" Mitchell, Phil Collier and Jack Scaddan—you name it—built infrastructure and provided services, but they did not blow debt like this.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** Yes, they did.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** No, they did not. The Premier can say they did, but they did not blow debt like the Premier. What do we see now? As the good times of the construction phase in the mining industry peter out, as the iron ore price comes down, as firms lay off staff, what do we have at a state level? We have a level of debt that makes it difficult for government to so-call pump prime. We have a level of debt that makes it difficult now for the government to spend to assist those people who are unemployed. What government should do in the good times is drive down debt, so that when the bad times come along government has capacity to spend. This government did the opposite of that economic orthodoxy. It did not do as Margaret Thatcher said—not wishing to quote her. It did not operate the finances of the state as a household in the way that any husband and wife would in their household—that is, when times are good, they put money in the bank so when times are bad they can cope. This government did the opposite.

Another point I raise is that the pipeline of projects in this state is no longer there. In the last 15 years or so there has been a steady pipeline of projects across the state. We have been a project-driven economy in industries such as iron ore, oil and gas, and various other minerals across Western Australia. I have visited numerous of those projects across the state; however, the pipeline of projects is no longer there. The two big projects that the Premier has always promised us, like a mirage on the horizon, James Price Point and Oakajee have gone; they are not happening. The Premier always promised that we would have those projects, but they are not happening. At the same time as this is occurring, we see the increase in royalties, which I want to talk about for a moment. We hear a steady drumbeat in the mining industry about the increase in royalties. We will find out in this year's budget where the government stands on royalties, but the Premier provided some clarity on ABC radio when he was asked about this issue by Geoff Hutchison a few weeks ago. This is the clarity the Premier provided to the gold industry. Mr Hutchison said to the Premier that some mining companies wanted to know whether he was planning to lift mineral royalty rates. The Premier answered, "No, we are not." He then said that the long-term principle is that 10 per cent of the value of the mineral is paid in royalty because the mineral belongs to the state and the royalty is a selling price, it is not a tax, and some royalties may not be in line with that 10 per cent rule and that is what the government was doing. There is the clarity for the industry. At the start of the Premier's sentence, the quote is, "No, we are not", but at the end of the interview, the result is, "Yes, we are." That is the clarity for the gold industry. I will explain the gold industry in this place just so members know: 22 000 Western Australians work in the gold industry, but because of the shocking debt and deficit position this government has left us in, unfortunately for the 22 000 people working in the gold industry, their industry is now under threat of this royalty increase. The reason royalty increases can be so counterproductive is that for every dollar we increase royalties down comes a dollar of our GST revenue. When the Premier complains about Western Australia's GST share, as he did yesterday, Western Australians should know this: with this royalty increase, the government is deliberately driving down our GST share. Ordinarily, it is a three-year lag before that kicks in, but if the commonwealth goes to immediate adjustments in our GST revenue, understand this: the increase in royalty will mean an immediate downward adjustment in our GST share.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** Seriously!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The Premier does not even know what is contained in the agreement; he signed the agreement and he does not even know this! When the Premier signed the agreement, he said, "Thank God for the GST!" I have the quote here, but I will have to make sure as the Premier is laughing insanely. I have to quote it for the benefit of the house, because I think the house needs to be reminded about what the Premier said about it. He said —

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God bless the GST.

...

It will be great for Australia and Western Australia.

At the time the Premier signed the agreement, that is what he said, and then, in 2005, sometime after he signed it, he said —

It was a sensible deal and it was a good piece of economic reform for Australia.

It was a rotten deal.

**Mr C.J. Barnett** interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It is, did you say?

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** I'm not interrupting your speech.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The Premier is interrupting my speech.

Just so that we understand, on the economic front we have lost the capacity that we should have had. We have had payroll tax increases. I do not like payroll tax increases. They are a drain on jobs. I understand that payroll tax is one of the three major tax bases of the state, but increasing payroll tax, particularly as has been done on smaller and medium-sized enterprises, is a drain on jobs. The reality is that when the royalty share increases, that will further drive down our GST share. It need not have been thus if the Premier had only listened to his own advice not more than a few years ago, when he said —

I am not going to lead a government that goes into deficit. I can tell you that right now.

...

As I have said, for as long as I am Premier and for as long as I am able, the Liberal–National government will deliver budget surpluses.

The Premier said that in this house. We are talking about royalties. The government relied on the iron ore price remaining at stellar levels forever. It spent on the basis of an iron ore price that would remain at those stellar levels. In last year's budget, six or eight months ago, it banked on a \$122 price, and the price yesterday was \$65. The Premier himself is the architect of the financial situation that he blames on others and says is nothing to do with him; it all happened around him without any of his involvement. This government is the architect of the financial situation that we find ourselves in—the GST share, the royalty decline over the estimates period, the failure to budget for the future, and the failure to leave capacity for when the economy turned down, as it inevitably would.

Over the coming months, I will continue to talk about the GST. It is a major issue for this state, and we need to work to get a better outcome. I can see no light on the horizon with Tony Abbott. I suspect Tony Abbott cannot see any light on the horizon either. Yesterday the Premier said that, unlike the rest of Australia, he is leading a stable government. I will take issue with that a little bit later on, but I think there was a pointed dig there at the commonwealth government. In Tony Abbott's speech the other week—the keynote address designed to save his job—he said that there would be no change to the GST arrangements. All that talk, for all those years, and all those ads about the cows being milked—remember them?—amounted to nothing, except perhaps for a change that means that we get an adjustment in the GST brought forward rather than delayed three years. If the government puts up royalties, it should understand this. It will be deliberately driving down our GST share immediately. That is the decision that the government will have made.

We should be talking about eastern states gambling revenues. It is a benefit for those states because it incentivises them to promote gambling, and it is a benefit for us because of the fact that we do not have poker machines. If the actual gambling revenues, rather than the capacity to raise gambling revenues, were included as part of the formula of states' revenue-raising capacity, this state would be better off to the tune of \$400 million a year. Therefore, that is where we should go. New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia have way too much gambling; it is pervasive, it is bad and the extent it has reached over there is evil. Because of Western Australia's isolation, we have had the benefit of not having to engage in that approach. It should be included as part of the formula, and there should be a national move towards it. It will be good for them, because it will disincentivise them to keep promoting and expanding gambling, and it will be good for us because of our lack of poker machines.

The next matter I want to talk about, which I have touched on, is unemployment. The unemployment rate in Western Australia bounces around; that is true.

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**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** Where is it trending?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It is trending up. Indeed, today Woodside announced significant layoffs, and last week BP announced significant layoffs. The drumbeat is there about what is going on. I want to provide the house with some evidence of what unemployment was and what it is. In August 2008, the unemployment rate was 2.7 per cent. This government was elected in September of that year. At that point in time 32 800 Western Australians were out of work. Today, in 2015, the rate is 5.6 per cent, and 82 300 Western Australians are out of work. That is 50 000 additional Western Australians out of work—roughly the population of Albany and Kalgoorlie put out of work during the term of this government. We see people who have come to this state heading home. The fact that people are leaving the state is actually improving the unemployment rate. People are leaving Western Australia on this government's watch because they cannot get jobs.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** So our population level is going down.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I thank the Deputy Premier for his interjection. I will quote someone who said this —

We have seen a spurt in employment in mining and petroleum that will come back to a reasonable long term levels and of those other workers will either return to their home state or move into other industry sectors.

That was the Premier, on the sixteenth of this month. From the Premier's own mouth, we have the statement that people who came to this state are actually leaving. We have a decline in population through workers leaving Western Australia. We have the CommSec report that analyses all states and territories. In July 2014, Western Australia ranked first. Now it is ranked third behind New South Wales, of all places, and the Northern Territory. New South Wales is beating us in economic performance. The "Westpac-CCI Survey of Business Expectations" from December of last year states —

Businesses are increasingly concerned about the state's economic outlook ...

Some 55 per cent of businesses expect the WA economy will deteriorate over the coming year ...

In other words, the economic outlook is not as good as it should have been, with 82 000 Western Australians out of work, CommSec rating us at number three, and Westpac saying the prospects are not as good as they should have been. We should have the capacity to deal with the situation on our hands. We should have the financial capacity to deal with it, but the debt and deficit makes it so much harder for the state to do so.

Over the good times, the past 10 years, a massive effort should have been put in to diversify the Western Australian economy. The Premier can say "diversification" in his statement, but he has not done it. He can say it because he has heard me say it. He has seen me out there talking about the fact that as a small population with a massive mining industry with a history of boom-and-bust cycles, but a highly educated, intelligent and energetic population, we should have looked towards other industries to a greater degree than we have. We should have looked to the creative economy; the IT sector; innovation and science; leveraging our universities; providing greater support for and interest in manufacturing; tourism; and leveraging our China relationship to a greater degree.

China needs to be more to us than just somewhere to send iron ore and other mineral products and some agricultural products. China has a massive demand for services. China has a growing population and growing income. It has a massive demand for services as the urbanisation trend comes off. I went there recently for two weeks; I saw it. The services China most needs are in the areas of environment, water management and occupational health and safety. We should be diving into those areas. We should be funding trade missions on the strength of our knowledge of those areas, yet we continue to stick with only the existing ones, which admittedly have been successful. Agricultural products and iron ore have admittedly been successful, but with the decline in the iron ore price and the wind-down of China's demand, we should have leveraged into other areas, but we have not.

What is more, when it comes to jobs there is the whole issue of training and education. I will say it this way: the people who are paying most for the poor financial management of the state government are those students at TAFE and school. We look at what the government has done to the training sector and the cost it has imposed on individual students. I met a student the other day who has to pay \$6 500 a semester to undertake a diploma of youth work, which is three semesters long. She could have gone to Penrhos College for less!

**Mr J.H.D. Day:** I doubt it.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Maybe that is not right, but in any event, she could have gone to Penrhos or Mercedes College for less than the cost of doing a diploma of youth work at TAFE. The government has removed caps on apprenticeships and traineeships. Over the last couple of years the government has put up the cost of many courses by more than 500 per cent. TAFE is the lifeblood of not only young people leaving school

**Extract from Hansard**

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wanting to get into the workforce, but also those people being laid off by Woodside now or BP last week, and those people being laid off when their mines downsize or indeed close. TAFE is the lifeblood for them to get back into the workforce and the government makes it increasingly difficult for those people to go to TAFE.

Then we come to education cuts. We heard what Malcolm Turnbull had to say about sloganeering the other night; he is not a fan of it. As much as the government sloganeers about student-centred funding models and the like, the fact remains that the government has ripped support out of schools. Fourteen thousand people marching along St Georges Terrace are not wrong. The government has ripped support out of schools and it advised schools too late. As much as the government sloganeers about this new funding model and spends money on public advertising campaigns, the fact remains that the people of Western Australia have seen through it. It means the government has made it tougher for the people in the regions, where kids are one-third as likely as a child from the city to go on to university. I know a bit about that because I was one of them. I want to draw attention to the fact that those trainees going to TAFE are the victims of this level of economic mismanagement.

I have a few other things to address. First of all, I refer to housing. I heard the Premier say yesterday that the government aims to deliver 20 000 affordable homes. There has been a slowdown in the price of housing but because of poor financial management, public housing has not been invested in. The crisis in housing is largely people who are homeless and down on their luck and living in cars. People live in cars at the end of my street and in vans in the car park near the CBH grain terminal. People, families, are living in cars; these are Western Australians. They are down on their luck for whatever reason. It might be the result of substance abuse, an unfortunate relationship breakdown or mental illness. They are down on their luck. They might have lost their job. What does the budget tell us? The construction purchase housing program for the first time in living memory goes down to zero in 2016–17. These are people who rely on public housing. I am not saying I can turn this around. I cannot turn this around. I cannot magically create money. But I can say that we would do better. It did not have to be thus. In 2016–17 the capital works program for housing is zero. No purchases, no bill. What amazes me is that 500 properties owned by the Department of Housing are sitting out there. Massive blocks are sitting there awaiting housing and development and because of some level of government incompetence and the numerous housing ministers the government has had, they have not been dealt with.

I went to one block the other day in Claremont in the Premier's electorate, next to the showgrounds. It is a massive block sitting there empty. It had rats on it. The neighbours were not too happy. It has been sitting there empty for five years. It must be \$10 million worth of land sitting there undeveloped. That is what a housing minister should be dealing with. He should be getting out there and dealing with those practical issues that would make a difference to the housing sector and allowing for housing to be put in place.

I turn to public transport. The love affair with cars will not last in the long term. It will not last. I like my car. Everyone likes their car. It will not last. We need to move to public transport to a greater degree. There is no integrated plan. We have had plans and they have been withdrawn. We had another plan and it was withdrawn. There is no integrated plan for transport for the long term for this state. Western Australia needs an integrated public transport plan. As I said at the start of my address, long-term planning needs to be put in place. We have to come up with alternative ways of getting people out of their motor vehicles. We must; it is essential. It is the only way that this city will survive in a liveable form for the next 100 years.

The Premier referred to road safety. I have an interesting column here from 12 January 2015, written by the member for Hillarys. I want to quote it. I thought it was a good column —

We don't need a miracle to reduce that number —

Of deaths —

just an honest commitment to follow the advice and recommendations of the Road Safety Council and spend the \$90 million that is sitting idle in the Road Trauma Trust Account. Funds in this account come from the fines that errant drivers have to pay for speeding and going through a red light. All the while we procrastinate, people are dying and being critically injured. It doesn't make any sense.

The member for Hillarys has proposed a solution and a way forward, yet we see inaction. Once we were the best amongst the states when it came to road safety initiatives and reducing the rate of deaths on our roads. Western Australia has now fallen right down the list to near the bottom. There are initiatives out there. The member for Hillarys identified them in his article. They are out there; we need to take them up. The wheatbelt region has one of the highest road death rates in Australia. I understand it might even have one of the highest per capita death rates in the world. We need to deal with that.

We also need to deal with cycling. I announced a cycling summit. The Premier said that that was totally unnecessary and the next week the Minister for Transport announced one! We need to have initiatives in all of these areas. It is part of a progressive city that deals with the problem of motor vehicle transport and allows people to live near where they work.

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The Premier mentioned Aboriginal affairs. The government introduced the Aboriginal Heritage Amendment Bill 2014. The member for Victoria Park wrote a wonderful column about the Aboriginal Heritage Act, which is a 43-year-old act. The Labor Party does not object to it, but what it does object to is Aboriginal people being left out of the process. That was the theme of the member for Victoria Park's column. We will await with interest for the debate on that because that is a central issue. Have we not learnt anything over the past 185 years? Involvement in the process is a way to treat Indigenous people with decency.

Another big issue is closing remote Indigenous communities and the false hope provided to Indigenous people in the north of the state by the Leader of the National Party, only to be dashed recently when he withdrew the commitment to support communities to stay open. On that note, we did not fight the commonwealth. We should have fought the commonwealth when it withdrew that money. Western Australia fought the commonwealth when it was trying to give us money for education. When Julia Gillard's commonwealth government tried to give us money for education, the Premier went to the barricades to object! This government pulls out resources from remote communities that had been there since 1968. John Gorton put it in place, and this Premier just rolled over immediately.

That reminds me of another major financial issue. While I am on the point, the current commonwealth government is withdrawing support for health and education. That will come up. Where is the plan for that? That is a massive financial issue. Withdrawing support for health and education from the states is the only way the commonwealth government can manage its finances. What will that do to us? We do not want to see a change to the GST. There will not be any change to the formula, according to the current Prime Minister. How do we deal with that? Where is the plan, apart from the Premier assuming it is someone else's problem, which, to be honest, it probably is!

I will raise a couple of other issues. This state needs continuing social reform. Social reform should not stop. I have said before that I support medicinal cannabis. The Labor Party supports victims of child sexual abuse being able to sue at the expiration of six years from when they turn 18 years of age. We support, and we raised, the issue of Aboriginal constitutional recognition via the member for Kimberley. We support releasing people from prison who are not convicted at the expiration of what their sentence would have been. Indeed, we brought in laws to that effect. We support class actions in Western Australia. I have campaigned for action on methamphetamines and synthetic cannabis. I note the government once again is following that, but there needs to be a rolling program of social reform. Society does not stand still. We need to have that.

Lastly, on the environment, despite the recent fires, I support prescribed burning. I noticed the Minister for Environment had some different views in relation to that. I support prescribed burning but I also support the creation of more national parks and marine reserves, and the preservation of the great western woodlands and making it immune from clearing. I also oppose shark culling.

I will close on two issues. Yesterday, the Premier said that we are fortunate in Western Australia to have stable government in contrast to the situation in the rest of Australia. By that I think he meant the commonwealth and the Northern Territory. To be fair, the Premier's government is more stable than that of Adam Giles'—well done! Let us have a look at it. Troy Buswell was one of seven Treasurers. Was there stability there? No. The Minister for Transport and the crisis surrounding him —

A government member interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** You did not notice? It happened in December! We might remind him of it later. We had the Minister for Transport's crisis. Western Australia has had seven Treasurers in six years. We have to go back the previous 40 years to find seven Treasurers. In the past six years, there have been seven.

Is it any wonder the Department of Training and Workforce Development is in disarray? We have had five Ministers for Training and Workforce Development—Collier, Cowper, Redman, Hames and Harvey. We have had four Ministers for Finance, and the department has only been around for four or five years! We have had O'Brien, Nahan, Nalder and Marmion. We have had four Ministers for Water—Jacobs, Marmion, Redman and Davies. The list goes on.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt** interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The Deputy Premier will be rotated soon, as I understand it.

That is stability in government according to the Premier. Then we have all those issues he campaigned on, that he was going to fix, including James Price Point. Remember all the court challenges when the government failed to do its work? There was the Oakajee development, the Environmental Protection Authority approvals fiasco, the shark culling, the prostitution laws, and the stop-and-search laws. All those issues were campaigned on by the government. There is stability! Then there were the broken promises, one after another. There has been an

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extraordinary array of broken promises by this government in every area. I outlined before what the Premier said about deficits: under no circumstance would he lead a government that produced a deficit. Now, it has produced the biggest deficit in the state's history!

The most recent example of this shambolic and chaotic government is the area of local government. When I say "shambolic", that is not me saying that—that is the Mayor of the City of Bayswater, Sylvan Albert, the former Liberal candidate for Maylands. That is what he had to say. I doubt he will be the candidate again.

Several members interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It is the Liberal Party's story.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman):** Members, I am on my feet! Bring it back to the speaker.

**Ms R. Saffioti** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for West Swan, I call you for the first time.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It has been shambolic and chaotic over a long period. It has been full of broken promises and missteps. It has caused massive cost to taxpayers and ratepayers across Western Australia. It is a saga that has gone on for the last six and a half years. This government has made one commitment after another and a change here and there for the past six and a half years, costing ratepayers and taxpayers a fortune. It lasted longer than the Second World War! The conclusion has been unconditional surrender by this government and this Premier. He is the one who surrendered because he is the one who started the war. He started the war and the citizens of the municipalities of Perth defeated him. I find it extraordinary that it is a disaster without consequence. There is no consequence for anyone out of it. All the Premier says to all those local governments is, "That was all your fault," despite the fact he told them to do it! That was all his fault. The Minister for Local Government, hapless as he is, took direction from the Premier on this. However, there is no consequence for anyone in government, despite this massive loss. Yesterday, we asked questions about the cost. This secretive government would not tell us. It came up with some line about a \$1.7 million grant program. The budget has \$20 million alongside the words "local government reform". We can read it. Anyone could read it. My 11-year-old could read it. Yet the government will not own up to it. The costs to all the mayors amount to around \$20 million. This is a disaster without consequence. No-one is taking responsibility. If this were a true government in which people took responsibility for their actions, the Minister for Local Government would not be there anymore; as nice a fellow as he is, and as decent as he is, he is the one who should carry the can for this.

*Amendment to Question*

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I therefore move to amend the question before the house. I move —

That the following words be added after "noted" —

and that this house notes the shambolic and chaotic forced amalgamation process that has unnecessarily cost taxpayers and local communities millions of dollars.

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah)** [1.20 pm]: I would like to formally support the amendment that has been moved. I am a keen observer of comedy and the history of comedy, and I like to use analogies and have done so in this place in the past.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Cockburn and member for Pilbara —

**Mr R.H. Cook** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Please do not tell me what I should do, member for Kwinana. Member for Cockburn and member for Pilbara, can you stop the discussion and pay attention to the speaker.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I have looked at some of the great comedy duos of history, and there is one that stands out. I know I am not allowed to ill-reflect on members, but I will paint this picture. Laurel and Hardy were a classic comedy duo during the late 1920s through to the 1940s. The description of Laurel and Hardy on Wikipedia is —

They became well known ... for their slapstick comedy with Laurel playing the clumsy and childlike friend of the pompous Hardy. The duo's signature tune, which is known variously as "The Cuckoo Song" ... played over the opening credits of their films.

Although I am not allowed to name or tag the Premier and the Minister for Local Government, a very clear comparison can be drawn by members in this place.

This has been a tremendous debacle in the history of Western Australian politics. In this process, which has gone on for over six years, all sorts of promises and commitments were made by the Barnett government. It goes back

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to the promise that was made before the 2013 election that there would be no forced amalgamations under a Liberal government. The now Minister for Local Government made the bumbling comment at a breakfast in Armadale that there would be forced amalgamations, and he was forced to withdraw that comment 24 hours later. After the Liberal–National government was elected at the March 2013 election, we had the first of a number of broken promises. But this was an absolute broken promise. It is now only the Premier of this state and the Minister for Local Government who think that this was not a forced amalgamation process. Everyone knows that throughout the history of this so-called reform program, this has been a forced process. Why do we say that? In the last 24 or 72 hours, mayors—many of them of Liberal Party persuasion—have highlighted the shambolic process that has been endured by the local government sector over the last six and a half years. Ex–Liberal Party candidates who are members of councils have made the comment that this process has been flawed, this process has been a facade and this process has been an attack on good people in the sector. A couple of brave and courageous members of the Liberal Party in this place and the other place have stood up and said that they have been led up the garden path, to quote the member for South Perth, who now of course has been shifted as far away from the Premier as possible, out towards the exit door. The member for South Perth and the member for Hillarys, and Hon Simon O’Brien in the other place, have dared to come out and speak the truth. The backbenchers in the Liberal Party, and some of their frontbench ministerial colleagues, have followed this Premier and this minister down the garden path. They are on record in their own communities as supporting this flawed and undemocratic process. They did not stand up when their communities were demanding a say in this process. They were happy to allow the people in East Fremantle, Kwinana and South Perth to have a say under the Dadour provisions, but they were not willing to stand up for the people in Kalamunda, Mundaring, Belmont and Vincent.

**Mr J.H.D. Day** interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Minister for Planning and Leader of the House, you were lost! You were missing in action, sunshine! The minister should talk to the people in Kalamunda. They are not happy with the minister, and he knows it. The minister was a late arrival to this. He did not turn up to any of the community meetings that have been held over the last year and a bit.

**Mr J.H.D. Day:** You are absolutely wrong.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** No. The minister was not happy to talk to people, such as the ex–Liberal members for those areas, who were speaking out against this process that was flawed and had been foisted upon them by this minister and this Premier. The members on the other side who failed to stand up for their communities are now suddenly starting to realise, “Oh, dear; this whole facade has blown up in our face.” The Treasurer in his electorate of Riverton argued that this process was important and needed to happen, and he then back-pedalled as fast as he could as soon as he saw this dissolve.

I want to hear from the member for Perth today, because the people of Vincent need to hear very clearly where she stands on this issue. The member for Perth wrote to the people of Vincent, including some of her constituents, in February 2014, and this is what she said to one of them —

Thank you for recently voicing your support for the Vincent to Perth amalgamation.

As your State representative in the Western Australian Parliament, and a firm believer in a Vincent to Perth union, I have on many occasions in the media and parliamentary chambers represented your views.

What a lot of bunkum! The member for Perth is now running around trying to rearrange the deckchairs. That is what she is doing. Why? Because she has been caught out, just like the member for Forrestfield, just like the member for Belmont, just like the member for Kalamunda and just like the minister in his own community of Serpentine–Jarrahdale. They have done nothing to listen to the people in their communities. The member for Perth is now trying to hide.

**Ms E. Evangel:** That is not what they are telling me.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I want the member for Perth to get up and tell us if this is tripe, because “tripe” is actually a word used by one of her other colleagues in the other place about this process. “Tripe” is a word that has been used by Hon Simon O’Brien. So why does the member for Perth not do that?

**Ms E. Evangel** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member —

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

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Mandurah and member for Perth, I am on my feet. Member for Mandurah, can you please move on with your speech. You know that you will be interjected on when you bait. So let us move on.

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**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** It is about truth. The member for Perth cannot say one thing to a small group of people and then say she supports the Premier and she supports the amalgamation of Vincent and the City of Perth. That is what she has done all the way through, and now she is trying to hide. The member cannot hide, because there will be a ballot soon—there will be a ballot in less than two years—and the member for Perth will have to defend a situation that she has failed in —

*Point of Order*

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Madam Acting Speaker, you will recall that yesterday the Treasurer constantly referred to me in his speech. When I sought to interject, I was named—not once but twice. The member for Perth is constantly interjecting on the member for Mandurah. Would you please just follow the orders that were given yesterday in respect to me?

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman):** There is no point of order.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Madam Acting Speaker, I seek your guidance because I will be speaking sometime today. I have been told by the Speaker—both the current Speaker and the former Speaker—that just because I am named by another member of the chamber does not give me any right to make an interjection. I am seeking to know whether that is now the position of the Chair.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I will take advice from the Speaker.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I quote from the member for Perth's letter —

As your State representative in the Western Australian Parliament and a firm believer in a Vincent to Perth union, I have on many occasions in the media and parliamentary chambers represented your views.

Then later in the letter in bold —

**Let's ensure our views are once again represented!**

Is there a typo in there? There must be a typo because what the member for Perth is saying now is absolutely opposite to that. It is time for the member for Perth to stand in this place. She should not give us her fluffy comments and her fluffy speeches about nothing. She should tell the people of Vincent—not me, not this side of the house—where she stands on what is proposed. I tell her what: what she has been saying and what she has said is now absolutely dead—a dud—and is an example of why this Premier and this minister have failed so dismally. However, she is not on her own. I have mentioned others—the member for Forrestfield, the Leader of the House and member for Kalamunda, and the member for Belmont. The member for Belmont said in a debate in this house late last year, “I think this is a great idea that Belmont and Kalamunda get together. I think they should be merged.” Where was she defending the right for them to have a vote? She did not even do that in the debate. She did not say that they should have a say—no, the member for Belmont did not. And that is where she failed. She did not give them a chance to have a say such as the people in those three local government authorities had a say a few weeks back. She did not do it, and that is her responsibility in this place. It may be very well for her to get up and flap her gums around with a range of stuff and how important it is, but her own mayor, Mayor Marks, in his attack a few weeks ago on the minister and the Premier said that the people of Belmont deserve a say—and the member for Belmont would not give them one.

The people have spoken. The member for Belmont, the minister and the Premier have been saying that only a few people are upset about this: “Oh, it's only a few.” Is it not interesting that if it is the case that it is only a few, it means that the member for Belmont after six and a half years has achieved zip? She has achieved nothing! However, her actions in this process have undermined the trust that the sector has had until her government's bungled proposal started to unravel. Her actions have undermined the trust in the sector and the willingness for reform. She has actually destroyed all that now. In the process of that, she and particularly the Premier of the state have actually denigrated the sector by saying, “The blame is now on them. It's WALGA's fault. It's the mayors' fault.”

**Dr A.D. Buti:** And they're corrupt.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** And that some of them are corrupt, as the Premier said on radio on 5 February. He said that the most corruption occurs in local government. The Premier and the minister are now blaming the sector. What do they think that does for the people of this state? I refer to the overwhelming number of councillors, mayors and presidents in local government throughout the state, including the hardworking staff and their families, who do a great job working hard for their local communities. What do the Premier and the minister think that their comments say to them? They say that they do not think they are valued. That is what the minister has done and that is what the Premier has done in their comments. They have said to the people in the sector, the elected members, the staff and their families that what they do is not worth it. That is what the

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minister has done and that is why he should fall on his sword. I know that the minister is persistently angry with his Premier about what he has dealt to him. I know it, most members of the sector know it and the Premier knows it. The minister has been dealt the biggest dumping on the front lawn that he would ever like to see, and he is now going to be the one who gets the most blame. He should not be part of it. The guy who is really to blame is the fellow who sits in front of the minister. This was his plan and it has failed. It has failed not only a little bit, as the minister said yesterday, but also dismally. It has been a facade. The minister should apologise to the men and women, the elected members in councils, and to the men and women who work in local governments throughout the state. He needs to apologise to them, particularly for the recent comments by the Premier because the trust is gone. They do not trust what the minister says, they do not trust what the Premier says and they do not trust the Liberal Party.

**MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington)** [1.36 pm]: I rise to support the amendment to the question on the Premier's Statement to add the words —

and that this house notes the shambolic and chaotic forced amalgamation process that has unnecessarily cost taxpayers and local communities millions of dollars.

I want to start with a theory. The minister gets appointed in about April 2013 and we can imagine that about July he has had the job a few months and is trying to work out what is happening. We can imagine what he would be doing. If I were the minister, I would be going to talk to the Premier and saying, "What's happening, Premier? What do you want out of this process?" We can imagine what the Premier said. We can imagine this because we all know what the Premier is like. He would have said—I am only supposing but I imagine this is what he said—"Don't worry about it; we'll work it out later." At the same time the minister had councils out there spending money trying to respond to the government's demands; he had the department in chaos not sure what it should do; and then he had people going to see their local members of Parliament. We can imagine that by the end of that year people were getting a picture of where the government was moving with this reform proposal. People were going to their local members of Parliament saying, "I don't support local government amalgamation if they're going to overturn democracy." Members of this house had a choice to make. We could back our communities or we could back the government. I am proud of the fact that the Labor Party backed the community and the Liberal Party should be ashamed of the fact that it backed the government.

Just as an example, in a September 2013 newsletter for the residents of Parkwood, Riverton, Rossmoyne, Shelley and Willetton, the member for Riverton said this —

Rather, I will, at the very least, seek to have the boundaries moved eastwards to Willeri Drive/Riley Road to incorporate all of Willetton under the City of Melville/Fremantle. I would also like to include Parkwood within the City of Melville/Fremantle. This position is consistent with the constituent feedback that I have received so far.

The members of his community, which is the same as mine as we share an electorate in the City of Canning, was demanding democracy in Canning. They were demanding to keep the City of Canning, but the member for Riverton had made his decision and he was backing the cutting up of the City of Canning and the City of Canning being abolished.

On 25 July 2014 in a media release, the member for Riverton said, "There is going to be a change." Later on in the same media release, he said —

"While people may think that from the map, it is not correct. The local community needs to understand that there are only two options available to them—join with Melville or be taken over by Gosnells," he said,

"There is now no option for Canning to stay as it is.

"This whole issue is about rateable income. There are obvious synergies with Melville, including having similar older, well established suburbs, a strong sense of place regarding the Canning River, good provision of community facilities and to some extent, a commonality of house values for example.

That was the member for Riverton's position on 25 July, and I can tell you very much, Madam Acting Speaker, that the community did not agree with that. The community was demanding that the City of Canning be preserved. The member for Riverton had a choice: he could back his community instead of backing the Liberal Party or he could back the Liberal Party and the Premier. What did he do? He did not back his community. That is simply a fact. On 25 July 2014, he told the community, "There is now no option for Canning to stay as it is." It will be interesting to see the member at the next election, if he is the candidate for the Liberal Party at the next election, explaining to the community that he thought that in July 2014 but he is no longer of that opinion. If that is the position of the member for Riverton at the 2017 election, everybody will be able to take that just as much as they could take the Premier's commitment not to have forced amalgamations.

**Extract from Hansard**

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On 10 August 2014, the member for Riverton said —

“The City of Canning’s campaign is an attempt to shut down democratic choice, not enhance it, ...

Actually, the City of Canning’s campaign to save the City of Canning reflected the views of the community, and everybody knew that at the time and everybody knows it today. The member for Riverton also said —

“I am the only elected representative looking after the best interests of the local community in my electorate.

He was supporting the abolition of the City of Canning. The local residents were demanding that the City of Canning be saved, yet he said —

“I am the only elected representative looking after the best interests of the local community in my electorate.

In other words, he was saying that despite the fact that the community wanted to save the City of Canning, he was going to demand it be abolished. He was not campaigning in support of the community; he was arguing against its interests. We will look forward to 2017, if he in fact runs as the Liberal candidate at the next election, because there are plenty of rumours that he will not be a candidate at the next election. He has done his turn as a minister. What else lies in front of him? He will never be Premier; we all know that. What else can he achieve? People in his electorate are telling me that they think he will not run. We know that that is the rumour about the Minister for Local Government. Many people in his electorate are saying that he will not be a candidate at the next election. Indeed, there are plenty of rumours about the Minister for Culture and the Arts, who is not in the chamber. We know about the Minister for Health; in fact, he has only another year to go as Deputy Premier, according to the Premier.

On 10 August 2014, the member for Riverton went on to say —

The Commissioner is a short-term government appointee pending the decision to either dismiss or reinstate the Mayor and Councillors. It is my obligation to inform the public of the only choice before the electorate of Riverton—combine with Melville or go to Gosnells.

When he refers to the commissioner, he is referring to Mr Linton Reynolds, AO. He is a superb public servant who has dedicated his life to the service of local government. He has been treated terribly by this government. He was dismissed without any regard and was replaced by three different commissioners, and I will come to them in a moment. The way he was treated was a disgrace. The way the Liberal Party treated Mr Reynolds is an embarrassment to the party. I have finished on that other thought. Linton Reynolds was properly reflecting the view of the community—it wanted to save the City of Canning.

On 27 October 2014, the member for Riverton said —

“Claims that the City of Canning has been well managed and that it is a viable authority have proven to be incorrect, highlighted by its dismal financial sustainability score of 49. This is inexcusable given its strong rateable base and its large amount of industrial area, ...

“The City of Canning ranked 28<sup>th</sup> out of 30 metropolitan local governments, clearly indicating that it has been poorly managed recently, which ultimately contributed to the Board’s decision to break it up.”

Let us understand that the member for Riverton is providing a justification for his opinion that the City of Canning should be abolished; he is not providing justification for why it should be retained. He is saying that these are the reasons he has decided that the City of Canning should be abolished. As I say, we will be very interested to see what he says at the next election, if he is in fact the Liberal candidate at that time.

In the same media release, he said —

“I will continue to argue for the boundary to move east and will work with the relevant local governments to make this happen.”

When he says that the boundary should be moved east, he is referring to including all the suburbs in his electorate in the City of Melville. When he says that he will work with the relevant local governments to make this happen, he is referring to the City of Melville and perhaps to the City of Gosnells. Let us understand that he cannot change his position. His position on these matters was to support the end of democracy and to support the government rather than his community.

I go to the *Canning Examiner* of 3 September 2014. Again, the member for Riverton said —

“My preference is for the whole electorate, including Parkwood as well as the rest of Riverton and Willetton, to be included within the City of Melville and I will continue to argue this case.”

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There is another item but I cannot see the date. In a letter to his constituents, he said —

The changes accepted by the State Government involving Canning include a boundary change, with a large part of Canning moving to the City of Gosnells. There are also parts moving to the City of Melville, the City of South Park and the City of Belmont.

The point I make is that he used the term “boundary change”. That boundary change was the abolition of the City of Canning, and that is the position that he was supporting.

Last night I was privileged to attend the council meeting of the City of Canning. Of course, as I said, the government got upset that Linton Reynolds opposed the amalgamations because they were not supported by the ratepayers and he had a duty to reflect the interests of the ratepayers. Last night I attended the council meeting at which the three replacement commissioners sat. These are the hand-picked commissioners of the Liberal government who replaced Mr Reynolds to steer through the abolition of the City of Canning. What did they decide last night? They decided that the ratepayers and residents of the City of Canning had made it very clear that they want to save the City of Canning. In fact, it was quite a remarkable conversation. I look forward to getting the tape of their contribution, because they made the point that the community has been transformed by this campaign, the park at the end of the street is now an important community facility that people feel ownership of and the City of Canning’s residents are now more engaged with the interests of the future of the City of Canning than at any time in the past.

I was also pleased that the City of Canning commissioners properly noted the work of the Canning Community Alliance. I must thank all the residents who campaigned so hard to save the City of Canning, but I want to pick out two particular people, Bill Prince from Wilson and Margaret Adams from Ferndale. They have always tried to make a contribution to their community, but they were galvanised with anger at the way they were being treated by an arrogant and out-of-touch government. The Minister for Local Government can look at what I have said in all the speeches I have given; it has always been the same. The problem is that he never knew where he was going. I know why that is the case. We can go back to the start of my comments. This was never driven by a plan and it was never driven by trying to achieve something; it was driven by the ego and arrogance of the Premier. The minister is a victim of this process, as is every council in the metropolitan area that has had to spend hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars trying to respond to a plan that only ever existed in the space between the ears of the Premier.

I point out that the City of Gosnells is currently commissioning—I imagine it has now stopped this—a computer connection between its premises in Gosnells and the City of Canning’s premises in Cannington. I understand that was going to cost \$820 000 and that they had already let the contract for the work. Will those councils be reimbursed for that incredible amount of money that was solely spent because of the shambles that the government has created? The Premier says that they did it themselves. Actually, Premier, there was never a vote at the City of Canning for it to be abolished and there was never a vote at the City of Gosnells for it to amalgamate with the City of Canning; it was a decision of the government and the government alone. That is only one example in one city.

There were four full-time staff at the City of Canning just providing answers to the four surrounding cities—that is, Melville, Belmont, Victoria Park and Gosnells—when they had information they needed about issues to do with the land they were taking over. This process has been a disgrace, a shambles, and thank God the people of Perth stood up to the arrogance of the Premier. We have won. We have kept the City of Canning and we are very, very proud of the work of the community. I am proud to have associated myself from the very start with the City of Canning residents who opposed this ridiculous plan to abolish the City of Canning.

**MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [1.52 pm]: We are seeing an extraordinary event here today. We have heard from the members for Mandurah and Cannington and they have pointed out individual members of Parliament who have failed their electorates. The member for Perth was vocal beyond belief when the member for Mandurah was on his feet raising what I think were legitimate issues about the member for Perth’s performance in representing the interests of her community. Where is she now? Why can we not hear from the member for Perth? She has an opportunity to defend herself now that the member for Mandurah has taken his seat.

Where is the member for Riverton? The member for Riverton has a case to answer. He has been shown to have completely neglected and let down his community. He said one thing to the Premier and promised his constituents another. He has been shown to be completely disingenuous with his community—pointed out by the member for Cannington—but where is he now, Madam Acting Speaker? This is the most extraordinary neglect of the duties of members of Parliament that I have ever seen. But we have the Minister for Local Government sitting in front of us. If there is one person in this place who should be up for defending the failed policies of this government, the one person in this place other than the Premier for whom this issue has been his daily and

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nightly obsession, surely the Minister for Local Government could get up and provide some sort of defence! Surely the Minister for Local Government could actually stand up and be accountable to the community. The member for Belmont is sitting over there; people want to know where she stands on the amalgamation between Kalamunda and Belmont, but there has not been a peep from her. It is extraordinary that we have such an array of parliamentary representatives who are prepared to say one thing to the Premier but another thing to their constituents. The case has been made. Surely they want to take the opportunity to get to their feet and defend themselves, account for themselves and try to provide some justification for their disingenuous position.

**MR A.J. SIMPSON (Darling Range — Minister for Local Government)** [1.54 pm]: I thank members for their contribution. It is important to realise today where we are and the reason we are here. I have stood in this house many times and have spoken about eight reports into local government. Last night I dug out the Systemic Sustainability Study report. At page 12 it clearly talks about the simple matter of how the sector is going to move forward and how this issue is going to be resolved. It clearly states —

Repeatedly this Plan lays down a challenge to Local Government—‘Engage and Reform’. In the absence of a critical mass of engagement and active participation in the reform process, Local Government will fail to demonstrate its credentials. In such circumstances the State and Commonwealth Governments would be justified in failing to respond in a welcoming fashion. The case is being made through the SSS process, of which this paper is a central plank, for the need for reform in Local Government as a whole.

This report was done by the sector, by the Western Australian Local Government Association, and it even includes a list of local governments that have gone through a reform process throughout Australia. The recommendations of the report all pointed toward a need for reform of local governments that had not changed in 100 years. The boundaries of three local governments have been meeting in Winthrop Hall at the University of Western Australia for 100 years. The university has had to deal with three local governments every time it has wanted to do something on its site. Do members think that they could have some way of resolving that issue?

**Mrs M.H. Roberts:** You could have solved that five years ago if you had a proper plan.

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** The sector has been very clear in this process. We have tried everything we can within this report and within the act, but one thing is very clear: Queensland and Victoria went through a process of legislating for local government reform. They used their numbers in the house to walk in and table a report to form a reform process. We have not done that. We have used the current Local Government Act to get to this process.

A number of questions have been asked. Why did we not have a vote? Why did they have a vote? It is quite simple. The Local Government Advisory Board gave me five amalgamations and nine boundary adjustments, so at the end of the day the vote that counts is the one that is in the poll; the only poll that happens is under an amalgamation. That is the Local Government Act. I am caught in the process that is in that act. I understand there is concern about a vote, but the advisory board gave it back to me. I stood here once again yesterday and explained that of the 12 proposals that I put in and the rest of the sector put in, there were 38 proposals—so they are their proposals —

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman):** Member for Warnbro! The Minister for Local Government has the floor.

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** They were their proposals and of all the proposals that came out of the advisory board, only one was mine; the rest were from the sector itself.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** Put in with a gun at their head.

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** I go back to the report: they wanted reform.

**Mr P. Papalia:** How come they are pulling out now with the threat to withdraw?

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** I will explain that in a minute.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members, the minister has the floor.

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** We went through that process of an amalgamation with Cockburn and Kwinana, Fremantle and East Fremantle, and South Perth and Victoria Park. The interesting part of the process that I have been through is that when I started this on 13 July with a reply to the Robson report, we started the process by trying

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to put Fremantle into Melville. There was a backlash from people saying Fremantle is our second capital city; it is the most visited city in Western Australia; it actually stands alone and there are not a lot of communities of interest between the City of Melville and the City of Fremantle. Therefore, in October we came out and tried to strengthen Fremantle and keep it as our second capital city. We moved to take what I call a reasonable move to take Hamilton Hill and Port Coogee into Fremantle to strengthen Fremantle so that it had the numbers. It is interesting that through that process, Cockburn was surprised to see—the member for Cockburn has raised many petitions in this house, grievances and even a protest—that it was losing part of its town to Fremantle and Melville. Members will remember the campaign “Hands off Cockburn” and the aeroplane that was flying the banner on the back that said, “Hands off Cockburn”. When the Local Government Advisory Board report came out in October, it gave a considerable bit back to Cockburn and still strengthened up Fremantle. That meant that Cockburn was happy. But guess what? Kwinana was not happy. The people of Kwinana told me that they liked my proposal and did not like the proposal of the advisory board. What did Kwinana do? It spent \$135 000 to campaign against using that poll provision. It was its right to do that and the government did not get involved in the matter. However, I need to make a couple of points very clear to the house about the poll provision process in Kwinana. In Kwinana, 20 000 people are eligible to vote, and for the vote to actually count, 50 per cent of the eligible voters need to vote; therefore, 10 000 of them have to vote. The real hook in the claw is that of the 10 000 who vote, only 5 001 have to vote no and the process does not go ahead. That is 50 per cent of 50 per cent of the people, so 25 per cent of the people decide whether that proposal should go ahead. The interesting thing is that if a person supports the amalgamation, the secret is that they should not vote, because the yes vote helps the no campaign and, member for Southern River, if I go through the votes that happened two weekends ago and take out all the yes votes, not one of the three would have got up. Can anyone in this house stand up and say that at last Saturday’s election they got elected with 47 per cent of the two-party preferred vote, and that is why they are a member? Members would be laughed out of the house. A candidate needs 50 per cent of the vote. That is democratic—everyone understands that, but that is not the case when it comes to the poll provision. The poll provision is flawed. It is not a fair redress for the community at all. We have argued over and over again that this poll provision needs to be addressed. This is one of the key issues with the Local Government Act 1974, which was reviewed in 1995, as it is out of touch with the current local government sector in the way it delivers its services.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 312.]