

CITY OF PERTH — COUNCILLORS — FREE SPEECH POLICY

775. Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN to the Minister for Local Government:

Mr Speaker, before I ask my question, I would like to acknowledge members of the Mandurah Uniting Church in your Speaker's gallery, including minister John Marshall, and especially Mrs Shirley Joiner, who has made an amazing contribution to the Mandurah community over many years,

I refer to the minister's comments in the media on Monday regarding the City of Perth and the media gag placed on councillors.

- (1) Why does the minister support the gagging of free speech by elected members of the council?
- (2) If the minister supports this gagging of free speech policy, does the minister support the City of Perth's extravagant and ridiculous clothing allowance policy as well?

Mr P.T. MILES replied:

- (1)–(2) On the question that I was asked on Monday about the so-called gag or not gag, that is actually obviously in the act. It has been there since 1995. It is not a gag as such, as has been portrayed by some of the councillors.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

The SPEAKER: That is enough!

Mr P.T. MILES: The mayor or shire president of any council in this state is the person who is the spokesperson for that council.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

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

Mr P.T. MILES: The mayor or shire presidents are the spokespersons for the local authority. They are an independent authority in their own right. Councillors do, however, have a right to go out there and champion local causes, speak in their local papers, or even go onto their local networks, radio or otherwise, to talk about issues around the broader area. That is what I said on Monday. So there is no gag at all.

In reference to clothing allowance or other allowances that are provided to councillors, the councillors themselves vote that right. That is not something that the government dictates. It is not the right of government to dictate what they do.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

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

Mr P.T. MILES: It is not up to the government to interfere with that level of debate within a chamber. It is up to the ratepayers of the local authorities to make sure that they vote on, or vote off, who they want to be representing them on council. That is the first and foremost thing.