

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — PREMIER'S COMMENTS

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

I refer to the Premier's statement on radio on 5 February 2015 that most corruption in Western Australia has been in local government and that —

... you get the odd element of corruption—most of it has actually been in local government ...

- (1) Does the minister agree with the Premier that most corruption in WA occurs in local government?
- (2) Can the minister provide evidence that local government is corrupt?
- (3) If the minister agrees with the Premier that there is corruption within the sector, what is he doing about it?

The SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah, I think you are asking an opinion on somebody's answer.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON replied:

- (1)–(3) It is probably a good question to put on notice to me about how many inquiries we have had. I do not know the exact number.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: Put it this way: there have been a considerable number of inquiries to do with local government and other sectors as well. The important parts are what has to happen and what has happened to local government. There does not seem to be much scrutiny around local government. As a minister, I sit in this chamber during estimates to answer questions from the opposition about my portfolio. Local governments never actually get the opportunity to attend estimates. There are annual electors' meetings and general questions at local councils, but there is no actual scrutiny of local government. This is one of the things I have noticed since I have been the minister; there are some areas we probably have to look at. There needs to be more scrutiny of local government. The issue that Western Australia has right now relates to high increases in council rates. It was on the front cover of *The West Australian* last year that rates are going up more than inflation. The Premier is probably right in saying there needs to be a bit more scrutiny of local government. I agree that something needs to happen. If it goes to numbers, the sector as a whole has to look at it. This is one of those areas we have to address, as well as reform. We spoke about reform, not just about boundaries. It is about making sure our local governments are accountable to ratepayers.