

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT

817. Dr A.D. BUTI to the Minister for Local Government:

I refer to the Auditor General's report into local government procurement. What is this government doing to raise the standards of procurement in the local government sector?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

I thank the member for Armadale for his forensic review of reports that is tabled in this place. They are very important, and I thank him for that. He is far more forensic than many in this place. Today the report for the inquiry into the Shire of Wiluna was tabled, which has relevance to the Auditor General's report that was tabled in this place on Thursday, 11 October. I want to make a couple of comments on the Wiluna report tabled today. It outlines some contraventions of the Local Government Act in the appointment of an acting CEO and authorisation of payments in contravention of regulations. One of the important recommendations is this whole issue around the need for greater understanding of compliance in procurement by elected members and staff.

Then we go to the Auditor General's report that was tabled last Thursday, which also specifically focused on procurement. The Auditor General looked at the procurement practices of eight local governments that were a mix of regional, metropolitan, larger and smaller councils. It found that important improvements need to be made. This underpins this government's achievement, which focused on giving the Auditor General the powers to audit the finances and performance of local government. The Auditor General's report highlighted a range of issues that need to be improved upon. Pleasingly, it found no evidence of misconduct. Although it found that local government policies broadly met regulatory requirements, there is a need for these eight local governments to monitor more closely procurement controls and effectiveness of processes.

This all underpins why this government is focused on ensuring that local government has a very clear and transparent template of operation. It is why we passed the Auditor General's legislation in this place last year and why we are forensically reviewing the Local Government Act. It is why we have passed in this chamber—it is now to be considered in the upper house—legislation related to issues around the suspension of dismissal of individuals. It is also why we are currently drafting legislation focused on the first phase of the review of the Local Government Act. As members know, we have commenced the process of the second phase of the local government review, which, of course, will look at the legislation that underpins the operation of local government in Western Australia. Included in the second phase is this whole issue around procurement. Great progress is being made by this government in the local government sector. We have a very strong partnership agreement with the sector through the Western Australian Local Government Association and the Local Government Professionals Australia WA organisation. There is much greater confidence that there is a genuineness about working together, unlike the other side when they were in power. I am very confident that as we move forward, these will all assist in creating a much more robust, effective, transparent and quality local government sector, delivering for the people of Western Australia.