

CITY OF MELVILLE — GOVERNANCE

753. Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY to the Minister for Local Government:

I refer to a number of complaints I have received about the City of Melville regarding a range of governance issues. Can the minister outline what steps he is taking to ensure that my constituents who have raised these concerns with me can have confidence that their council is following best practice in its delivery of community services and infrastructure?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

I thank the member for Bicton for her question. It is an important issue and it is very important that members in this place understand what has occurred in regard to an authorised inquiry into the City of Melville. An authorised inquiry, of course, is undertaken by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries and is part of the role and responsibility of the department under part 8, division 1 of the Local Government Act. It is a mechanism that allows an inquiry to be undertaken under certain terms of reference. I make this very clear: it does not suspend the council at all, in any of those contexts. It is a mechanism that the department uses to allow it to inquire into issues that are brought to its attention and that it believes have reached a certain threshold with regard to the need for investigation.

Unfortunately—I mean this sincerely—over the past couple of years there have been a substantial number of complaints about some of the operations of the City of Melville. There have been a range of issues, including relationships between elected members, staff and the community, such as ratepayers' organisations et cetera. Some of the decisions made by the council have been highlighted as concerns. These complaints have been ongoing over a period of time. This inquiry will examine matters relating to the council's relationship with the city's administration; the adequacy of council policies and procedures; decisions made with regard to the acquisition of land; and other matters that the investigation team believes are relevant and appropriate to inquire into.

There is no set time for this because obviously the investigation will take its course. I expect that the City of Melville will cooperate closely with the investigative team. At the end of the day we want to ensure that good governance and clear policies and procedures are in place so that the relationship between the council and the residents and ratepayers of that municipality—an important municipality in the Perth metropolitan area—is responded to. What I hope for from this process is a series of recommendations that will allow that council to move forward.

As I said, this is not a suspension. We are not going down the path of the suspension process, but a threshold has been reached that the department believes requires it to carry out an investigation. I note that the department has been working with the City of Melville over the last 12 months to try to address issues around communication and the conduct of meetings et cetera, but this inquiry will now allow all those things to be inquired into in an open and transparent way. Indeed, it will provide a chance for the City of Melville to ensure that confidence is restored in the wider community and that good governance can be restored to the people of that important municipality within the Perth metropolitan area.