

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — AMALGAMATIONS

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

Since the Premier will not answer the question, this question without notice is to the Minister for Local Government. I refer to the minister's shambolic and disastrous local government forced amalgamations plan.

- (1) What was the total cost of this process to the taxpayers and ratepayers?
- (2) Why will the minister not now reimburse affected councils for their costs as he promised in 2013?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(2) I think the interesting part is, as the Premier has pointed out, the process that we have been through has been a voluntary process, to a certain degree.

Several members interjected.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: I have stood in this place on many occasions to talk about the systemic sustainability study report on local government. That report was done by the Western Australian Local Government Association and the sector and it said that local government reform —

Several members interjected.

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

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: That report made it quite clear that reform should happen in this sector and that government should lead the reform. The sector told the government to do that. That was the seventh report into reform in the metropolitan area when the systemic sustainability study panel brought it out. We did another one, the Robson report—to make it eight reports into this sector—on how we can best deliver services to the ratepayers and help local governments. The cost of this reform —

Mr J.R. Quigley interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Butler!

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: The sector has made it very clear that it does not want to go down the path of reform. I think the Premier's words were spot on when he said that the sector is incapable of reforming itself. We went through the process of using the Local Government Act and the Local Government Advisory Board. In no way did we change the legislation of the Local Government Act as it is today. We have used the current act—their act—to get to this process.

As the Premier pointed out, we respect those three votes and we cannot go forward with those reform processes. I am working through the situation where the nine boundary adjustments are. As I stated today, I will meet with the affected councils to work through that to rescind the Governor's Orders. I have given out \$1.7 million since I have been the minister, just in my time, to local government to help with the reform process.

Another thing that is very interesting is that I have met with six mayors since last Tuesday and every time I meet with them to talk about this process I ask the obvious question: at the end of this process can they take anything away? They say, "Yes, we can. We are doing some sharing. We are sharing planning, rubbish and ranger services." They are talking to each other and looking at each other's business plans. There are some synergies that we can take away from this. There are some that are keen to look at this, but we want to let the dust settle on this and we will come back to it on a case-by-case basis.