

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS — LOCAL VOTING RIGHTS

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [10.30 am] — without notice: I move —

That standing orders be suspended so far as to enable the following motion to be debated forthwith —

That this house rejects the Barnett government's model for forced council amalgamations that does not allow the opportunity for a local vote of ratepayers in suburbs such as Willetton, Riverton, Cannington, Belmont, Mundaring, Bassendean and Mt Lawley, and that the house further rejects any attempts to implement forced amalgamations for regional councils.

The reason the opposition has moved to suspend standing orders is that the maps and boundaries that the government intends to enforce upon the people of Western Australia only came to public attention yesterday afternoon. This is our first opportunity to debate the important issue of local democracy and the government's broken promise at the last state election. It is also our first opportunity to bring to attention the fact that the government is creating first and second-class citizens in Western Australia—those who are entitled to a vote and those who do not get the right to local democracy. This is the government's doing; it needs to explain it. We asked the Premier yesterday about that and he refused to explain. Why do some people get a vote and others do not? This is an opportunity for members of this house to explain to their electorates by the most obvious technique available where they stand on this issue. That obvious technique is how members vote in this house.

The members of the electorates of Belmont, Kalamunda, Darling Range—the electorate containing the Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale—and Mount Lawley, Mr Speaker, will have the opportunity to tell this house where they stand on their citizens having a vote on their local future. The National Party will be able to say where it stands in relation to the regions. This is a great exercise in democracy that this government should allow to happen. It is also an opportunity for the government to explain a few interesting developments that have come to light after the maps were released yesterday. The interesting development that the government needs to explain very well is why it is abolishing the City of Subiaco and creating a new City of Subiaco incorporating the existing Town of Cambridge, and not creating the new city of Riversea. In so doing, it appears to have left 3 000 ratepayers without a local authority. How is it that all those people living around the University of Western Australia in the suburb of Nedlands, and all those people living in Mt Claremont, formerly part of the Town of Cambridge, who are now not being incorporated into the new City of Subiaco, are now not being incorporated into the new city of Riversea, which does not exist? How come they are left stateless! How can it be that 3 000 citizens of Western Australia, those people living in Nedlands and Mt Claremont, will now not have a council? Will those people be collecting their own bins, putting them in the trailer and running off to the tip? Will they be out there stirring up the asphalt and filling in the potholes? Will they be doing that? There appears to be anarchy in the western suburbs. In the member for Nedlands' electorate and in the member for Churchlands' electorate, the government is creating anarchy.

Point of Order

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The Leader of the Opposition has moved a motion to suspend standing orders. He should be speaking to the procedural motion. However, I can indicate that the government will agree to 20 minutes for each side. If the Leader of the Opposition sits down, I will move an amended motion to that effect and he can carry on, I suppose, in the same way he has been.

Debate Resumed

Mr M. MCGOWAN: I thank the Leader of the House for allowing me to carry on for 20 minutes at the conclusion of this. I look forward to an explanation about the forgotten people of the western suburbs.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I think 20 minutes each side has been agreed to.

Standing Orders Suspension — Amendment to Motion

MR J.H.D. DAY (Kalamunda — Leader of the House) [10.36 am]: I move —

To add after “forthwith” —

, subject to the debate being limited to 20 minutes for government members and 20 minutes for non-government members

Amendment put and passed.

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion, as Amended

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The SPEAKER: Members, as this is a motion without notice to suspend standing orders, it will need the support of an absolute majority for it to proceed. If I hear a dissentient voice, I will be required to divide the Assembly.

Question put and passed with an absolute majority.

Motion

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [10.37 am]: I move —

That this house rejects the Barnett government's model for forced council amalgamations that does not allow the opportunity for a local vote of ratepayers in suburbs such as Willetton, Riverton, Cannington, Belmont, Mundaring, Bassendean and Mt Lawley, and that the house further rejects any attempts to implement forced amalgamations for regional councils.

This is an opportunity for all members of this house to put on record where they stand on this government's broken promise in which it is forcing council amalgamations across Perth. It is also an opportunity for members of this house to put on record where they stand in relation to forced amalgamations in the regions of Western Australia. I would expect to see those members standing up for their communities; members such as the members for Belmont, Perth and Kalamunda to actually put their money where their mouth is on this issue. All those suburbs I mentioned, and dozens of others, will not receive the opportunity to have a local say when it comes to the abolition and amalgamation of their local authority, yet some people in Western Australia will get the opportunity and others, in the Premier's own electorate, are being excluded from the process altogether. The Premier is creating a four-tiered society—councils in his own electorate do not have to go through this process.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I want to hear the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Then those other areas subject to so-called amalgamations in South Perth, Cockburn and Kwinana, and Fremantle and East Fremantle will get the opportunity to have a local say under the poll provisions of the existing act. The people in all those other areas—dozens of suburbs—represented by the members for Swan Hills, Morley, Mount Lawley, Perth, Kalamunda, Darling Range and Belmont will not get a say. Why are they denied an opportunity for a local referendum? Why is the government creating four tiers of citizens in Western Australia? The government needs to provide the answer to that. The government also needs to put on record the future for the regions of Western Australia. We want to know where members stand on forced amalgamations in the regions. We also want to put on record—it is very important to make this point—that this process has been shambolic, chaotic and dysfunctional from the beginning. I give members one example—Perth and Vincent. The Liberal Party government, of which the Premier was a part, created Vincent in 1994 to create a central capital city that concentrated on itself. That is what Richard Court said.

Mr C.J. Barnett: It was wrong.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Did the Premier say that was wrong?

Mr C.J. Barnett: He should have followed my advice, with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, and he would have been spot-on.

The SPEAKER: Premier, I do not want any interjections.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Richard Court got it wrong; Colin gets it right! That is what the Premier is saying. The Premier is always settling old scores. Twenty years later, he is still settling old scores. Remember, Richard said that the Premier should not be the Liberal leader, and the Premier is getting Richard back every time he can!

The Court government created the greater City of Perth, and there are ministers of that government who are here today. But the Premier has said, "No, we need to undo that and bring ratepayers in, so we will go for half of Vincent." Then the Premier has said, "Maybe we won't go for half of Vincent; we will go for all of Vincent." That is his third model. The fourth model is, "Oh, if we get all of Vincent in there, we'll have all of these people who vote who we don't like very much, so we'll weight the voting towards one group against another group." There have been four models and the process has been shambolic and chaotic.

Then there is the case of the Burswood peninsula, with Crown Perth and the stadium in it. Yesterday in the briefing the government never mentioned that the plan is to leave it with the Town of Victoria Park, or the new city of South Park, but we learnt that in five years' time, if the government is re-elected, it will go into Perth. That is the secret plan behind the scenes that was hidden from the briefing yesterday. Then we learnt that in creating the new greater City of Subiaco—this is an important point that needs to be answered—the government is adopting the maps provided by the Local Government Advisory Board, which rolls Subiaco and Cambridge together. The maps provided by the Local Government Advisory Board exclude the area around UWA and a part of Mt Claremont, and show that that should go into the new Riversea council. But the new Riversea council is

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not being created, and the government has adopted the exact map of the Local Government Advisory Board, which means that 3 000 good people in the western suburbs, according to this Local Government Advisory Board map, will not have their own local authority. There will be 3 000 forgotten people in Western Australia. It is all falling apart before our eyes. What is the government going to do? We all know, because the minister has said it a dozen times in here, that the government can either accept or reject the proposals, and the government has accepted them. What happens to those people in Nedlands and Mt Claremont? Why is the Premier treating those people so appallingly? What have they ever done to the Premier apart from vote for him? Why is he treating them so badly?

It is anarchy in the western suburbs under this government. The western suburbs will not have their own authority. Those poor people will be collecting their own rubbish, trimming their own trees, fixing the roads and mowing the verges.

Mr P.T. Miles interjected.

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

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn, do you want me to call you?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I expect the government to explain fully what is going on. I think the government forgot about them, and its plan is now falling apart. We learnt yesterday about the secret plan to move Crown Perth and Burswood into the City of Perth in five years. Now we are learning about how the people of the western suburbs, and the people who live in Broadway and in the area where all the students are living around UWA, are being treated. They will not have a council. The fourth class of person is those living around UWA.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Yes.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Premier says, yes; they are not going to have their own council. What is the government going to do? How will the government manage it? The government needs to explain how this has been allowed to happen.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members for Cockburn, West Swan and Warnbro!

Mr M. McGOWAN: I want to close on this point, because I want to let other members speak. The editorial of *The West Australian* today pointed out that what the government is doing is expressly different from what it said before the state election. In other words, that is a nice way of saying that the government is breaking its promise; it is breaking its word. I quote, as exhibit A, a press release by the Minister for Local Government, dated 21 February 2013, which states —

I recently made some remarks at a local forum that the Liberal Party supported forced council amalgamations. The Liberal Party does not support forced amalgamations, I got it wrong, it was my mistake. I apologise for the confusion this has created.

That is what the Minister for Local Government had to say. It is pretty clear that that is a complete, utter broken promise. The process has been a complete and utter dog's breakfast, a shambolic process and a mess, and it is already falling apart.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier) [10.48 am]: Clearly, the Labor opposition has a policy to try to disrupt and delay reform. It is fair enough that that is the approach of the Leader of the Opposition, but I ask the question: does the opposition have a policy for local government? Does it have a vision for local government for this century? I suspect the answer is no. Its only approach is to try to delay and disrupt. The opposition has a political strategy, but no policy at all.

Ms M.M. Quirk: What about your policy?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If the member for Girrawheen listens, I will outline it right now.

The reality is that greater Perth has a population of just under 2 million people, and it is growing strongly. The growth is in the outer suburbs, with high-residential redevelopment within the inner city suburbs. The greater Perth area is an integrated metropolitan area; it is not comprised of 30 little agencies or councils. It would be an easy issue to walk away from, but the Liberal Party will not walk away from it, as the opposition certainly would. I remind the house that there are 138 local authorities in Western Australia, and 30 within Perth. Some administer areas of less than five square kilometres. There are farms in Western Australia far bigger than that. In country areas there are councils with fewer than 1 000 people, some with fewer than 500 people and one with

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fewer than 250 people. Most primary schools are bigger than that—and the opposition thinks there is no reason for reform.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, I call you to order for the first time. There is plenty of time for everybody to speak.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I also make the point that the minister has made repeatedly: there has been little or no change in the Perth boundaries, apart from the outer growth, in the past 100 years. The opposition keeps talking about the forgotten people of the western suburbs. On my latest count, there are 48 local councillors in the seat of Cottesloe! If we take the wider western suburbs —

Several members interjected.

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

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am addressing the Chair, Mr Speaker.

If we take the wider western suburbs, there are 70 local councillors—nearly as many members as those in this house—administering the western suburbs. The opposition tells me that we should not be reforming. Of course we should! There are local governments that cover less than five square kilometres. Get up to speed—it is the twenty-first century, not the nineteenth century.

Mr J.R. Quigley interjected.

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

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Since 1918, there has been report after report about the structure of local government. In the post-war period alone, there have been eight major reports and investigations into local government, and they pretty well all reach the same conclusion: there should be fewer and larger, viable local governments. Even the report of the Western Australian Local Government Association found that something like 80 local governments were not sustainable, including some in the metropolitan area. “Not sustainable” means they will go broke or their residents and ratepayers will have enormous future increases in local rates just to pay salaries. But the opposition thinks we should not go near it.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Tell us the Labor Party policy, because the leader did not. The Leader of the Opposition gave no policy commitment at all. I look forward now to hearing the policy of the Labor Party.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen, I do not want you upsetting yourself like this. I call you to order for the first time.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Why are we doing this?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Why are we doing it? It is not easy, and one of the reasons for that is the way in which the Local Government Act is drafted. It is a very difficult piece of law to deal with.

It might just be that a reduced number of viable, significant but more evenly sized local governments will provide more and better services to their residents. There is no doubt about that at all. There will be significant economies of scale, particularly in areas like the western suburbs. There will be cost savings. I am sure the minister will talk about it, but there will be something like \$6 million of savings just by these changes. There will be less duplication, less inconsistency of local government laws and less red tape. The Minister for Planning has done an enormous job in removing red tape. The major constraint now is the 30 local authorities across greater metropolitan Perth. There will be more consistency for a family building a house, for example. The rules will be similar across the metropolitan area and the state.

Ms S.F. McGurk interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That is a charming comment!

In looking at not only 30 small local governments, but also across greater metropolitan Perth, as the city grows we have to have good land use planning, including subregional centres of employment within Perth. We need to look at the density of Perth in different areas of development. We have environmental issues, the Swan River being one. How many local authorities are there on the Swan River, minister?

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Mr A.J. Simpson: Seventeen.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Seventeen. People talk about fixing the Swan River. There are 17 local authorities. Does the opposition think that is sensible? I do not. We have major infrastructure issues, particularly in transport. We are planning and developing major infrastructure, like the rail line out to Forrestfield and the airport, like the extension through the northern suburbs, like the light rail or whatever happens to the north of Perth—all those things require cooperation and partnerships between the state and local governments. Small, probably unsustainable local governments cannot partner with either the state or federal government in major issues of land, environment, infrastructure, zoning or higher residential densities. This is about planning Perth, where 75 per cent of Western Australians live. That is why it is important, that is why the Liberal Party has a policy, and that is why the Liberal Party is acting.

Mr D.J. Kelly: Does that include the National Party?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The National Party can speak for itself, but the Liberal Party will do this—we will do it!

Ms S.F. McGurk: What happens in cabinet?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I will get to that.

The recommendations of the Local Government Advisory Board, under the directions of the Local Government Act and the minister, took on this task. It has come back to government with a very comprehensive report that looks at the viability and sustainability of local government and all the issues—the big picture, detailed look. The recommendation is that we go from 30 to 16 local councils, and the government accepts that. That is what we accepted.

Mr M. McGowan: You excluded five.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Listen, son; listen.

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am speaking to the Chair.

The recommendation is to go from 30 to 16, and we have accepted that. We have agreed, and we have released the report. I am asking the opposition to please listen, because it is not listening. We have released the report, as we said we would. We have accepted that we will go from 30 to 16 local authorities, and we have accepted the boundaries put forward by the Local Government Advisory Board—with two exceptions. There is one principal exception relating to the City of Perth and the consequential effect on the western suburbs. We started this process three to four years ago. While standing on top of one of the towers in Perth, I made the point that we are going to establish a capital city with the major institutions of the state within it, and that that was our prime objective as a government. The Local Government Advisory Board, I think, took more of a metropolitan view; that is fine. The state government's policy is to create a City of Perth, a true capital city for our state—if you like, Australia's west coast capital. That should be the status of the City of Perth. It is a unique situation. That is the unique council amongst all others, and it has therefore been treated differently. The City of Perth will be established through legislation giving it the status of a capital city. There may be different rules that are yet to be drafted, but there is capital city legislation certainly for Melbourne and, I understand, Adelaide. The major facilities of the state will be included—Parliament and the courts. We will add to existing facilities Kings Park, the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre and the University of Western Australia and the area immediately surrounding it. They are state iconic institutions that should and will be within the City of Perth so that it will be a true capital city. That has been state government policy—certainly Liberal policy—for a long time.

Bear in mind that areas like Crawley are already in the City of Perth, so there is nothing too radical about this. Taking, if you like, the eastern edge of Nedlands and putting it in the City of Perth affects the boundaries recommended for the western suburbs, so we cannot accept the map of the western suburbs because it is consequentially changed by what we are doing for the City of Perth. I make the point that we accept the recommendation of the LGAB that the five councils in the western suburbs come together—that has not changed; they will come together, whether it is called Riversea or whatever else. So, they are not exempt or excluded. All we have is a practical requirement that facilities like UWA go into the City of Perth, and therefore the LGAB recommendation cannot stand. Perhaps we will resubmit how the process will work —

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It does not matter if we do. We will have to resubmit, but the five local governments —

Several members interjected.

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

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Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I am on my feet!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: In the western suburbs, yes, there will be a resubmission. That may just take a few weeks because we are not disagreeing with the objective—that is, the amalgamation of the five western suburbs. So it will not be another two years. The process may be five or six weeks.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Resubmit.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: So what—because we cannot accept the boundary —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am pleased the member is concerned about the western —

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

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I walk the dog every morning and people say to me, “Hi, Col. Keep up the good work.” I have not had one person say to me, “Gee, don’t amalgamate the western suburbs.” I have not had one person come into my electorate office for six months on the issue because they do not care; they just want a good municipal service.

The state government would prefer that the Burswood Casino and the new Perth Stadium were in the Perth capital city. The Local Government Advisory Board has recommended that we retain the natural boundary of the river. We have conceded that; we have agreed to that. At the briefing yesterday with the councillors and the local government representatives, I made it very clear that the casino area is already under the administration of the state. It will remain under the administration of the state covering the casino and the Burswood precinct so that the Town of Victoria Park—or South Park—has no role today. I explicitly said that in five years we will come back and have another look at that. In the meantime, the status quo is maintained and the Town of Victoria Park will continue to collect and retain the rates from the casino. I was quite clear about that. I could see a beaming smile on the Mayor of Victoria Park when I said that.

We are now at the point at which the government has accepted the boundaries, with the exception of the City of Perth arrangement. We are now at the point of going into full implementation, and that will take a little while. There are local issues and particular points to deal with, but we are now into implementation. Can I again remind the house, as I did yesterday, that the cabinet of Western Australia made a decision. It is now —

Mr M. McGowan: Part of the cabinet.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, the Leader of the Opposition is not listening to the point. I am sure the Leader of the National Party will again explain his position.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No; he can. That is the alliance arrangement. The National Party ministers were not present in cabinet; they left cabinet and cabinet made the decision. Whether the National Party ministers were there or not is of political interest —

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Albany!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is of political interest. If legislation comes to the house, it may be of legislative importance, but in terms of a government decision, the cabinet has decided. As Premier, I have signed off on that. That is binding on every single institution within government. It is a formal cabinet decision and it has been signed off. That is the reality for every agency on planning, on development and on everything. As Premier, I say that that is the position. That is the case.

We now move into implementation, and that will apply to put that plan in place. It will not happen overnight. It is complex under the Local Government Advisory Board. There will be a mix of legislation, amalgamation and boundary changes. We will work with those councils being most cooperative and they will gain benefits for their residents out of this process. If it takes one or two years, so be it, but it will be put in place.

I wish the Nationals were with us on this but I guess they are sitting to one side. But the Liberal Party will put this in place. Through a range of programs and particularly royalties for regions, this government has provided enormous benefits to country and regional Western Australia that have been long overdue. I think that people in country areas think that the city has a right to make its decision. The children and the grandchildren of country

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people who probably mainly live in Perth will believe that it is a good idea to modernise local government and to move on from what has been in place for 100 years.

The Labor Party has virtually no country members—there are a couple here—but it will be interesting to see whether the opposition members can develop a policy for local government in metropolitan Perth, or will they be the small —

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Can you?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: We have just outlined it. That is what we are doing. Will the Leader of the Opposition just be the small-minded person he appears to be and simply try to disrupt and delay? Do you have a policy?

Mr M. McGowan: Do you have a policy?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I have just outlined exactly what we are doing.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [11.04 am]: What a balls-up! What an absolute balls-up this is.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah, I think that you should tone down your language. There has been some very colourful language used in here of late, and I do not think it is very parliamentary—but continue.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: What an absolute cluster. What a disastrous experience we find ourselves in now, less than 24 hours since the announcement of what was proposed as the biggest reform in local government in 100 years, and government members blew it. In less than 24 hours, they blew it. They already know that they will now have to go back to the Local Government Advisory Board because 3 000 people in two pockets in the metropolitan area, under the maps that the government released yesterday, have no representation. If ever there was a chance for a Prince Leonard to ride in and create a new province, now is the time. He can ride down the Broadway in Nedlands and set up a new province. He can ride into the hills of Mt Claremont and set up —

Mr P.T. Miles interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo, I call you to order for the second time. I want to hear about Prince Leonard.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: He can set up a new province in Mt Claremont and establish himself as the emperor of that little regime. Let us be very clear about this. At the election in March 2013, the major parties, the Liberal and Labor Parties, had the same policy—they would not force amalgamations. Only one party broke its promise: it was the Premier, his minister and his Liberal Party. The Premier promised no forced amalgamations and then as soon as the election was over, he went ahead and through his process has forced amalgamations on the councils within the Perth metropolitan area.

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

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

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Only one party lied, and it was not us. The member for Belmont and the member for Perth, and there are others, should be very careful with what they say out there now because the residents of their areas in the Town of Vincent will be listening very carefully about whether there will be vote weighting, which was a contradiction yesterday. The Premier said one thing and the Minister for Local Government said another. These are examples of the absolute shambles that this government has had with regard to this policy.

Let us remember that with this most significant announcement in local government reform for 100 years, the government did not even have the decency to come into this place yesterday and table the Local Government Advisory Board's report —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Local Government and Premier, I do not want to hear from you. I want to hear the member for Mandurah.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The government did not have the decency to do that. It is the natural, normal thing for a government to do if it is making an announcement that is of significance over the last 100 years to local government. The government did not do that—nor did it have the decency to make a brief ministerial statement when Parliament sat yesterday at 12 noon. When the government met yesterday with the mayors and the chief executive officers and made the announcement, they were not even allowed to ask any questions. All the government did was go in there, dump the maps on them, and say that this is what it is doing, and then it scurried outside to the media to tell us how wonderful it is and what a magnificent performance has been put on by the Liberal–National government to reform local government. Then today we find out that the government could not even get the maps right because now we know that a few thousand people do not have any representation. This is

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an example of the absolute shambolic process that the government has embarked upon over the last five years. If the Liberal Party had gone to the election promising no forced amalgamations, as we did, and kept to it, it would not have copped all the rubbish that it has copped—all of the deserving criticism and accusations by many about a lack of trust and doublespeak that the government has given throughout this process. The government would not have copped that if it had told the truth. If the government had gone to the 2013 election and said that it will not force amalgamations but if local government does not reform itself over a set period, it will move legislatively, it would have had a mandate. But the government does not have a mandate for the process that it has embarked upon. This process has been shambolic and pathetic.

The motion before us today is very specific; it clearly asks why there is a discrepancy in the government's maps and in its announcement that allows some people to have a democratic right and a say in the future of their local governments and others do not, including the people who live in Willetton, Riverton, Cannington, Belmont, Mundaring, Bassendean, Mt Lawley and Serpentine–Jarrahdale. The hypocrisy of this issue goes to the centre of the minister himself. His community of Serpentine–Jarrahdale will have no say. He promised them before the last election that they would not be forced into an amalgamation. In fact, he was forced to correct himself at a meeting of business leaders in Armadale during the election campaign at which the member for Armadale was present. Fewer than 24 hours later, he was forced to correct himself through a media statement by saying, specifically, that the Liberal Party does not and will not be forcing amalgamations. The minister has turned his back on his own community. The government will not be giving it a chance to have a say about its future. He has dumped this on the community. This is an example of the deceit and the utter distrust that many people in this sector have because there is support for reform. The Labor Party supports reform in the sector but we will not tell lies. We will not lie to the sector and say that we will do one thing and immediately after an election do the opposite. That is what the Premier did. The Premier went to the election telling people one thing and then embarked on a process that did exactly the opposite. He disregarded the democratic rights of people to have a say through the Local Government Act and the Dadour poll provisions.

This is an absolute shambles. It is the fault of the government; it is no-one else's fault. It is the fault of the Premier—no-one else's fault—because of his arrogance and the way that he has tried to impose his grand vision. He forgets about the detail and the democratic principles on which our system is based. He is to blame for this debacle. He has again demonstrated his arrogance. He should be condemned for a process that now sees people not represented at all under this pathetic, shambolic state of affairs.

MR D.T. REDMAN (Warren–Blackwood — Leader of the National Party) [11.12 am]: I want to make some very brief comments to put the position of the National Party on the record. I want to make the point from the outset that we have these alliance arrangements with the Liberal Party that allow us to preserve our policy integrity on a number of issues. I can count only two or three issues in which we have had conflicting policy settings. Aside from those two or three issues, we have been very effective in government in delivering a range of very good outcomes for not only metropolitan Perth but also, significantly, regional Western Australia.

The National Party also supports reform but we have a different position on the strategy of how that can be achieved. We want to maintain efficiencies in local government. We also want to protect the identity of local government. We have progressed and we are in discussions with the Minister for Local Government around some subsidiary legislation that we believe, certainly for the regional local governments that we represent, is a good strategy to help in that reform process.

The Nationals' position is that we have not supported forced reform, and that is a position that we stated from the outset. At the start of this term of government, we supported that in the metropolitan area as long as there was a preservation of our policy position for regional Western Australia. That was a very difficult position for us. We have taken the position since then that we will be withdrawing from that support in metropolitan areas. I think we have been consistent in our message. I certainly see it as a strength that we are able to preserve policy integrity in those arrangements. A number of issues come up when making these decisions, whether it is during a vote in the house or legislation, and the National Party will be taking a position that is consistent with its policy settings.

MR A.J. SIMPSON (Darling Range — Minister for Local Government) [11.14 am]: The opposition's motion, for which standing orders have been suspended, is quite interesting. The "Metropolitan Local Government District Inquiries Report" has been out for nearly 24 hours and is available on the internet. I noticed that the member for Cockburn was reading it yesterday afternoon; he asked me some questions about how the process unfolded.

Let us get the facts right. As I have said in this house many times, the Local Government Advisory Board received 38 proposals from local governments. There were a number of suggestions for each of the identified proposals.

Mr Mark McGowan; Mr John Day; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr David Templeman; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Tony Simpson; Mr Bill Johnston; Speaker; Mr Ben Wyatt

Mr W.J. Johnston: Is any of that in there?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: Yes, it is all in the report.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Show me.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: Page 93 quite clearly explains the boundary adjustments for amalgamation.

Tabling of Paper

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The minister is quoting from a document. I believe it is an official document. I ask him to table it.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: I am more than happy to. By making it available on the internet, I will save a bit of paper because the member will not have to print it.

The SPEAKER: The document is tabled.

[See paper 2324.]

Debate Resumed

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: I have 13 new proposals in front of me. I put in 12 proposals on behalf of the government. Of those 12, only one has got up. All the other proposals have come out of the sector. One came out of a community group in Cockburn. It asked for an amalgamation with a boundary adjustment; hence, the advisory board recommended that the Town of Victoria Park and the City of South Perth be amalgamated.

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: They did ask for a boundary adjustment.

The SPEAKER: Minister, through the Chair, please.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: The report clearly sets out how the Local Government Advisory Board came up with the proposals. It refers to each proposal, it goes through each of the proposals and it explains how it came up with that proposal.

It is interesting to have a conversation about the democratic vote and the case for a boundary adjustment versus amalgamation. That is what the sector asked for. We have adopted its proposal.

Ms R. Saffioti: Who is the sector?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: The sector is the local governments that have put proposals to the advisory board. Its proposals are in this report.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for West Swan, there is only a short time to go.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: They are the proposals that the advisory board accepted and recommended to me. Again, I can only accept or reject.

As to the proposed city of Riversea and the little orphan suburb on the side, we made it very clear yesterday that we totally agree with the advisory board that Riversea, which amalgamates five councils, is a very good concept of local government. Unfortunately, we cannot accept that proposal because the boundary will be moved when the City of Perth act comes in. We will work through that very quickly to get that boundary sorted and go back to the advisory board.

Several members interjected.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: More importantly, because the advisory board has already done the work, all we have to do is make site boundary adjustments in the original proposal. It is quite straightforward; it can be done with no dramas at all and it can go back to the advisory board to come up with a proposal.

More importantly, the decision made yesterday is a milestone for local government. I have been reading all the tweets, emails and text messages. The sector is excited by it. We finally got a decision. It has been asking for a decision. We worked long and hard over 17 weeks of public submissions to get to this process. This is the right decision. We need to get on board and ensure that local government is sustainable into the future.

MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park) [11.18 am]: After five long years, the Premier asks the Labor Party, "What is your policy? We will have to resubmit 3 000 people in the Gotham City of Perth without a government." He probably achieved the one thing he wanted to achieve: he reduced government in two little areas of Perth. There is not a government to be seen, and after five years he says, "We have to resubmit." What an extraordinary performance! I note that neither the Premier, the leader of the National Party nor the Minister for Local

Extract from Hansard

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Mr Mark McGowan; Mr John Day; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr David Templeman; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Tony Simpson; Mr Bill Johnston; Speaker; Mr Ben Wyatt

Government dealt with these abandoned Western Australians, out there now in their tax havens. Perhaps the Premier has a retirement plan to run both of them. Pieces of Perth have been missed out. What is going on? It has taken five years. The Premier's buddy Mal could not even get that right after all this time, yet we are still waiting for an explanation. The Premier does not have a policy. This is the problem. We are still waiting for his policy.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I have allowed some latitude. There are only three minutes to go. I do not want any more interruptions.

Mr B.S. WYATT: We are still waiting for the policy that outlines when it will have to resubmit. The Premier's western suburbs buddies went through his backbench like a dose of salts: "We will push that off to Mal to do something about them at some point in the future." However, they can do whatever they want, apparently, with the Gotham City bits. Then the Premier asks, "What is the Labor Party's policy?" Let us not forget that this is his vote weighting. I note that the Minister for Local Government has said that there will not be any vote weighting. The government may not call it "vote weighting", but I can tell members that the votes will be weighted. I note that an article in *The West Australian* states —

Mr Simpson poured cold water on the prospect but the Premier suggested he could look at capital city legislation similar to that in the City of Melbourne, which has weighted votes.

The government may not call it vote weighting; it might call it the prestige of the City of Perth or the prestige of the University of Western Australia, but there will still be weighted votes.

One curious thing in all of this is that a couple of different cabinets are operating. The Premier said that this is a formal cabinet position that has been taken and all those government bodies had better look out, but then the Leader of the National Party said on radio that he was not part of the cabinet decision on council reform. I do not know who is in and who is out of this cabinet. Maybe in honour of the late Gough Whitlam, the Premier has gone back to that original strategy. He and his buddy Kim are sitting there making decisions: "We are the cabinet. Those twits will come along with us." Of course, the Leader of the National Party is letting the Premier go for it; he has taken a few steps back, because he can see this ticking time bomb that everyone else can see, except for the member for Perth, who, in an extraordinary act of self-destruction, said to the minister, "Well done, minister, for that sterling performance during your debate", not quite realising that the people of Vincent are sharpening their knives as we head towards Christmas.

It has been five years and the Premier has forgotten some Western Australians, yet he asks, "What is the Labor Party's policy?" Once he gets up and finally explains some things—maybe even a time frame or what the policy is—we might have something to debate. I think the one person who has worked out that there is a lack of any policy fortitude is the Leader of the National Party. He has worked this out, and all Western Australians can work out that after five years, it is nothing but a sham.

Question put and passed.