

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — AMALGAMATIONS

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

I refer to the major council amalgamation agenda this government is embarking on, despite denying it during the recent election campaign, and the minister's reported comments on 31 May that "a bucket of money" will be made available.

- (1) How much is contained in the bucket of money that the minister will throw at councils to amalgamate?
- (2) From where will this bucket of money be obtained?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(2) The member may be aware that two weeks ago I held a series of meetings with the mayors, CEOs and presidents of the 30 metropolitan councils to outline the government's approach towards the reform process. There were a number of frank discussions and questions from the floor. I raised the fact of a funding model. We looked at a number of issues on the table. For instance, through a process in Queensland, local governments had to produce receipts for the cost of amalgamation so that the government could reimburse them. We have gone through the department to look at a number of models of the best way forward, as not one size fits all. As members can imagine, through the reform process some councils will be bigger than others. It also depends on their rate base and population, and what changes are needed in that process to make a new identity. We are going through the process at the moment.

Mr D.A. Templeman: So how much?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: Patience is a virtue, member. You will have to wait for the report to come out!

Members can probably use the terminology "a bucket of money", but the process is to find the best model that fits all. As I said at the start, not one model will fit all. We will go through that process. We will more than likely go through a process of working out what sort of programs will be funded in the reform process. That will all be identified when we announce our report to the 30 mayors and presidents of local governments. We will bring them back in when we reply to the Robson report. We will go through that process, keeping in mind, member, that the Robson report contains 30 recommendations—only one is a map—that will affect local governments all over the state.