

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADVISORY BOARD — CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST REQUIREMENTS

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

I refer to regulations gazetted on Monday that remove the conflict-of-interest requirements for members of the Local Government Advisory Board who are deliberating on the government's amalgamations policy.

- (1) Why has the minister allowed this when he has previously stated in this place that members of the board will not participate on reviews of their own local government area?
- (2) Has the minister included this provision so that he can push through his illegitimate amalgamations?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Mandurah for the question. The member is correct. In each of the 38 proposals that were put to the Local Government Advisory Board, we made sure there was no conflict of interest. That meant that if a board member worked in a local government or owned a house in a local government that was under deliberation, they could not sit in deliberation on that proposal or on any proposal involving a neighbouring local government. We have gone through the process and have reviewed all 38 proposals. The Local Government Advisory Board has written to me and asked me to look into section 7 of schedule 2.5 of the Local Government Act on the issue of conflict of interest. At the moment, as we get to the end of the report, all board members need to sit down and look at the bigger picture.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah, if you want to ask a supplementary question, I will give you a chance.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: The member for Mandurah is right. All the work has been done on the 38 proposals—modelling, finances and boundaries—but to bring that jigsaw puzzle together in a report, all five board members have to sit down and review the whole package. They do not get involved in the detail; it is to bring the final report together to give to me. The conflict-of-interest issue relates only to the final bit of the outcome.

Several members interjected.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: The Local Government Advisory Board is made up of local government members and CEOs, so there will always be —

Several members interjected.

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

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: As I said, the advisory board is made up representatives and CEOs of the local government sector. Conflict of interest has always been an issue with the advisory board. It has deputies who step in through this process, but as we put the report together and finalise it, we have to give the board members the opportunity to look at the bigger picture and to make sure they have considered all the opportunities on the table.