

DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES — AMALGAMATIONS —  
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

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

I refer to a freedom of information application lodged with the Department of Local Government and Communities that reveals the existence of six documents, all refused release, detailing costs associated with the implementation of the government's model for local government amalgamations.

- (1) Why is the minister hiding the cost of the amalgamation plans from Western Australian taxpayers and local government authorities?
- (2) Why were these costs not revealed during the public submission process to encourage informed debate?
- (3) Will he immediately release his department's analysis of costs associated with the government's amalgamation model; and, if not, why not?

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON replied:**

I thank the member for Mandurah for the question.

- (1)–(3) With regard to the freedom of information request, each of those six documents is under cabinet confidentiality, so I cannot release them, because they have gone through the cabinet process. The interesting thing about the cost is that this is one of those areas that needs a fair bit of work done on it. The member may remember that in January, we launched the online toolkit as part of this process to work out the full costing of what needs to be spent. The other work we have done is investigate the Queensland model to look into how much money was spent on its reform process. We have also looked at the bottom line. If I can use the analogy of the City of Stirling, it may, depending on the process, lose or gain some of its current boundary. If it loses some of its current boundary, the cost will obviously be very minimal, if anything at all, compared with the cost of trying to put seven councils into one, which will cost more. We are still working through that process. We are also going through the budget process to make sure that we can put enough resources into the budget so that the costings are sorted out and we can do this. We have said from day one that the government will be up-front about the costs of this reform process. The costings are still being worked out.

I can point the member also to some other data that is available to us from the reform in Geraldton and Northam and other areas, and also a report that was done in 2007, 2008, 2009 or 2010, I think it was, for Subiaco and Nedlands, which identified the savings, because to work out the costings, we also need to look at the savings. As the local governments work through that process in their toolkit and look at their management plans and workforce plans to see what the costs are, that is how we will work out the cost of the amalgamation process, and we will also be able to look at the savings to work out how much money we will have to put into this process.

With regard to the freedom of information request, unfortunately that is out of my hands, because those are cabinet documents.