

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM — HON SIMON O'BRIEN'S COMMENTS

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

I refer to comments of Hon Simon O'Brien in the Legislative Council last night on the government's local government reform, when he described the Minister for Local Government's ongoing claim that he is not forcing amalgamations by using boundary changes as "absolute tripe".

- (1) Why will the minister not concede that his claim that he is not forcing amalgamations is, as Hon Simon O'Brien said, to the discredit of this government and reflects very poorly on its members?
- (2) Why does the minister not stop talking absolute tripe and tell the truth: he is forcing amalgamations on a number of local councils in the metropolitan area?
- (3) Will the minister confirm his claim on radio this morning that only two Liberal Party members are opposed to the policy?

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

I thank the member for the question.

(1)–(3) The last time I checked, only two members in the upper house had spoken on this.

Several members interjected.

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** It is on the public record. I think we are going through a good process at the moment.

The interesting part is that we are making up for 100 years of doing nothing. Reform has to happen. Western Australia is the fastest growing state in Australia. Half a million people will be coming here in the next 12 years. We have to get local governments in a better position to help with that growth. Bigger local government is a more economical way to do it better.

**Mr M. McGowan** interjected.

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** In regard to the reform process and the process where we are at the moment, the advisory board will come back to me, as the member is very much aware.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** But you have made a proposal to use boundary changes to force amalgamations. Why don't you just admit it?

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** I am using the current act, which states that today. Under the current act, I can do either.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** Why don't you just admit it?

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** As I was saying, member, at the moment we are not changing the current act in any shape or form to make the reform process any easier. I am using the legislation that is there today. I have not changed any of that process. The poll provision is still in that process as well.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** But you're trying to avoid it, aren't you?

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** No. I have not put in anything about it. Keep in mind that my proposal is only that—it is only a proposal, along with the other 30.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** Only a proposal!

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** They are all the same in front of the advisory board. They will make that progress and make that submission to me.

We have a long way to go in this reform process, and I am encouraged that so many local governments are working together; they are all working with the local implementation committees. Some great work is happening. I think the advisory board will come back with a model for Western Australia, especially for the metropolitan area, that will result in our local governments being better resourced to meet the challenges of a growing state and growing city. We are going to work through this process.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** How much is it going to cost?

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Mandurah, if you want to know how much it is going to cost, maybe ask another question. I call the member for Mandurah to order for the first time.

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** I think the progress we have made today is right where we need it to be. The advisory board can do its work. The independent board will make that determination and get back to me. That report will identify the benefits, financial modelling and all that we need. Also, the other processes and funding process will come out of the toolkit as we move forward through the implementations committee process.

