

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — AMALGAMATIONS

**250. Mr M. McGOWAN to the Acting Premier:**

I refer to the local government rally last night outside this building, which was another strong and vocal community reaction against this government's forced local government amalgamation agenda. Will the government now listen to the community and withdraw its ill-conceived forced council amalgamation agenda?

**Dr K.D. HAMES replied:**

The answer is simple and not much different from the answer given yesterday by the Minister for Local Government—and that is no. A large number of members of this house have served as council members for long periods. You, Mr Speaker, served on the City of Perth for a long period, and indeed as Deputy Mayor. I am not sure how many on our side have. Hands up those who have been in local government! I count seven and me, which makes eight. Mr Speaker, there are at least eight.

**Mr M. McGowan:** Mr Speaker, are you going to allow this—people turning their backs to the opposition?

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** At least eight members on this side have had various roles on councils. I was on the City of Bayswater —

**Mr R.H. Cook** interjected.

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

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** It is at least eight on this side. I do not suppose members on the other side care to put up their hands to indicate how many have been in local government.

*Point of Order*

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** Mr Speaker, the Deputy Premier is trying to engage in audience participation. Can I seek your view on whether, if we respond to him, we will be called to order?

**The SPEAKER:** I think we have passed audience participation now. Can the Deputy Premier now please proceed through the Chair?

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have been able to determine, with the kind assistance of the member for Cockburn, that probably three on the other side have been involved in local government as councillors or in positions in local government. I think that is important because our side over the years has had a very strong involvement with local government. We understand how it works, we understand the pressures upon it and we understand the efficiencies of council. I have to say that the City of Bayswater —

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** You've clearly been clearly in Dianella.

**K.D. HAMES:** Give it a rest!

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you, member for Bassendean; I call you to order for the first time.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** The City of Bayswater was an excellent council, led in my time by the honourable John D'Orazio, an excellent mayor. Since that time there was an amalgamation process that included Maylands being taken away from the City of Stirling, as I am sure members are aware. A lot of work was done at that time that showed the ideal size of a council was well in excess of the size that Bayswater was at the time, which was about 50 000 people. I think that change increased to about 70 000. It was determined in various reports that the ideal size of a council to provide efficiencies of service was in the order of 100 000 people. The people outside this building last night were protesting against this local government reform at the very last minute and over a very long and protracted process that was initiated by the former Minister for Local Government —

**Dr A.D. Buti:** Yes, because you stuffed it up; that's why.

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

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Indeed, it has not been stuffed up because it has given all councils and all people —

**Dr A.D. Buti:** You lie!

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you. Right, withdraw that statement, please.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I withdraw that statement.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the member for Armadale to order now for the second time.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Everybody within those communities had ample opportunity to have their say on this matter. It seems to me that the people protesting the loudest were from councils that may be amalgamated as part of this reform and may lose their positions.

**Mr D.A. Templeman** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Mandurah, I call you to order for the first time. There is plenty of time for you to ask questions or to make comment later in the day.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** The proposal has been put forward that people living in those communities will in some way lose out in that the library just down the road suddenly will not be there anymore.

**Mr D.A. Templeman** interjected.

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

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** The proposal being put forward is that the library down the road suddenly will not be theirs to use anymore or the park will be in another council area so that they cannot go to the park. That is absolute nonsense! Those facilities will be there for everybody to use. I go to areas in the City of Bayswater if I am in Dianella. In Mandurah I go to areas in Pinjarra council. I go to areas where the services are provided by those councils and that are accessible to me. The argument by the Labor Party is therefore nonsense. Local government reform is going through the process; it will go before an independent review and then come back to the minister. There can be no argument that very small councils are inefficient and need to be larger in size. That has been argued year after year after year, and we are the only ones with the guts to move down the road to that process. I say more power to the minister responsible, more power to the minister —

**Mr R.H. Cook** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Kwinana, I call you to order for the second time. Is the Deputy Premier finished?

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I am finished, Mr Speaker, and I will wind up the sentence by saying that I strongly support the Minister for Local Government and the action he has taken. It is the appropriate action and it is in the best interests of the ratepayers of Western Australia.