

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — COUNCIL RATE INCREASES

**528. Mr A. KRSTICEVIC to the Minister for Local Government:**

What has the minister done to stop a number of councils from increasing their rates well above the consumer price index?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:**

I thank the member for the question. As the member is very, very clearly aware, councils are autonomous entities that of course have the powers to set rates, including their rates for each year, and it is not within my powers to direct councils to comply with any limit. However, as the member knows and as he highlighted to me when we had a discussion yesterday, and as I commented in today's newspaper—when asked—all local governments in Western Australia should be very cognisant that many families have tightened their financial belts to ensure that they are making ends meet and are able to meet the obligations of their personal household budgets, and rates, like any other costs, impact on that budget. Therefore, I would encourage, very strongly, local governments to very carefully consider the needs of their community when they set the rates.

There is an advertising period, as the member is well aware, and I encourage ratepayers and businesses within local government jurisdictions to comment on those advertised rates, because it is an important part of their democracy for them to give feedback to a local government about the proposed rate settings. Traditionally, my understanding is that lots of local governments do not necessarily get a huge amount of correspondence or feedback on rate settings, even though there may be some angst in the community about the rate that is finalised and set. However, I recommend very, very strongly to all ratepayers and all local businesses within those jurisdictions that when the rates are advertised, they take the democratic opportunity that they have towards them, and let their councils know about their views.

The other important thing about rate setting is that councils have an obligation, in my view, to articulate to their communities, to communicate to their communities, the priorities of their local government and the costs associated with their priorities, and to seek feedback. A good local government has strong communications with its community and engages with its community at an early stage about priorities for that community, including, of course, how those will be funded, and, ultimately, what that rate might be.

As the member is well aware, the newspaper article today highlighted that some councils have advertised rates above CPI; some have proposed rates below that. Of course, I would expect that the communities within those jurisdictions that are unhappy would make their voices heard. It is important that they make their voices heard. I have made some public statements, as I think the member for Carine has. I think the member supports the public statements that I have made. I do not think he has disagreed with my comments. But this is another example of why we need to have good legislation passed in the other place, which includes, of course, a universal training regime, which includes in its focus making sure that local government elected members —

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** What is wrong with the member? Does he have a problem? What is the member's problem?

**Mr R.S. Love:** Why didn't you introduce it on 9 May?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Why does the member not have his mate from north coastal here? What is his story? I heard there were a few problems yesterday. He was playing rugby in the morning and he was as crook as a dog in the afternoon. If he is unwell, I am sorry he is unwell, but it is very, very suspicious. I think the member for Moore was running around behind the scenes, trying to quell any change in the leadership of the National Party. The member was running around and saying, "Dear me, this is a bit upsetting", like Captain Mainwaring in *Dad's Army*. That is what the member looks like; he looks like Captain Mainwaring in *Dad's Army*. Let me get back to the point, Captain Mainwaring.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister, you will call the member by his correct title.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Members who remember *Dad's Army* would know of a character called Walker who was always trying to make deals. I wonder which member of the Nationals that might refer to, because he ain't here today! Anyway, I am happy to answer the question.

Local government rate setting is a very important time of the year. I urge all interested people who are concerned about the rates that are set to make sure they let their views be known to their local government.