

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS — MAYOR OF COCKBURN

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

I refer the minister to comments on commercial radio this morning by the Mayor of Cockburn, Logan Howlett, when he made the following statement about the botched council merger process —

We were told by the Minister face-to-face that there was no economic analysis done. There was no community of interest evaluations. It was purely based on a political decision by the Premier and some of the members of the Liberal Party to carve up Cockburn.

With those comments in mind, I ask —

- (1) Did the minister make any such comment to the Mayor of Cockburn?
- (2) If he did not, why would the mayor gain such an impression?
- (3) Has the minister done an economic analysis of the mergers; and, if so, will he release it now?

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

(1)–(3) I thank the member for the question. As the Premier pointed out in answer to the first question this afternoon about the matters that came out in July, through that process we consulted with the community, and the Fremantle port city—our second city—became a viable proposition for ensuring that we hang on to our identity. I think everyone in this chamber would agree that the Cities of Melville and Fremantle do not have a lot in common. The interesting exercise is to make sure Fremantle remains as our second capital city. I refer to the process that was followed to get where we are today. The City of Fremantle population needs to increase, so we propose that the boundaries come down the coast towards —

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** Did you make the comments to the Mayor of Cockburn?

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** I will get to that in a minute.

We propose to expand the boundary of Fremantle to increase the population to make it more sustainable. We also propose to increase the boundary of Melville. As everyone knows, three important aspects are required to ensure good local government: first, a residential base; second, a commercial base; and, third, industrial land. Those are the three components needed to raise good rates. If we work through that model for Melville to Bibra Lake and Fremantle down to Hamilton Hill and Coogee, both areas will be expanded. The process for Cockburn takes half of Cockburn into Kwinana.

Several members interjected.

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** Hang on! Let me make this point: Kwinana and Cockburn will still be very viable, strong local governments. In the next 10 to 15 years they will enjoy huge greenfields growth. Their boundaries will include Jandakot airport and the industrial strip of Kwinana, which are all part of that growth needed by local government.

When we met with the City of Cockburn last Monday, I went through the process. The people brought up a case and identified the financial modelling. They were quite clear about and very proud of their financial modelling. I think they said that they were number four out of 30 metropolitan local governments with their financial modelling. They identified a couple that were in the 20s. I wanted them to work out why they ended with their financial modelling, and the financial modelling of others was not as good as theirs. As I say to all members, how do we rate a local government?

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** What did you tell the mayor?

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** Hang on. Do we rate it on how low its rates are, whether it budgets better, what services it delivers, how good its services are or do we rate councils on all those things? I had a long conversation with the Mayor of Cockburn about this process.

Several members interjected.

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** Hang on. We can get through this. He was trying to find out how we did the economies of scale and what financial modelling we built them on. The financial modelling will come later —

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** What about the mayor's comments on radio this morning?

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** We have changed Cockburn's boundaries from what we first thought they would be.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** What about the mayor's comments on radio this morning? That is the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Mandurah! Minister, you have given us a good explanation. Can you answer the question?

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** I will, Mr Speaker.

At the end of the day, the Mayor of Cockburn made some allegations about the Liberal Party doing it for those reasons. No such thing has happened. We have based it on a model of what we think is best for local government. The answer to the question is no, I did not.