

LOCAL GOVERNMENT, INVESTIGATIONS INTO COUNCILS

60. Hon Jim Scott to the Minister for Racing and Gaming representing the Minister for Local Government  
In relation to Department of Local Government investigations into local government councils -

- (1) On what basis will the Department of Local Government start an investigation into a local government council?
- (2) Will the Department confirm information is correct before beginning an investigation?
- (3) Is the Local Government Department required to give the Mayor and councillors 35 days to comment on any report produced from an investigation?
- (4) Are there circumstances where this comment period can be changed?
- (5) If yes, what are these circumstances?
- (6) Is it normal practice for the Department to discuss allegations with the Mayor and/or councillors of a council before an inquiry is decided upon?
- (7) Under what circumstances is this not carried out?
- (8) What action, apart from sacking, can the Minister take against a council which has had adverse inquiry findings made against it?

Hon N.D. GRIFFITHS replied:

- (1) The nature and veracity of the information received pertaining to the council.
- (2) The Department establishes that there are sufficient grounds before commencing an investigation.
- (3) When reports of authorised inquiries are provided to the local government it is required to advise the Minister within 35 days of the things that it has done or proposes to do to give effect to the recommendations contained within the report.
- (4) Yes.
- (5) The circumstances may be any that the Minister accepts.
- (6) It depends on the nature of the allegations.
- (7) If the cause for concern is such that the investigation needs to commence without the specific knowledge of the mayor or councillors.
- (8) A council which has been subject to adverse findings in a Departmental report can be suspended by the Minister. An inquiry must then be held to determine whether the council should be reinstated or dismissed.