

CITY OF MELVILLE, EXPENDITURE ON POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

739. Hon JIM SCOTT to the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development:

- (1) Can the minister confirm that the City of Melville has voted to spend \$300 000 outside its local government area on political activities against sitting federal and state members of Parliament who support the deletion of the Fremantle eastern bypass?
- (2) Will the minister establish that any written material put out during the federal and state election campaigns by the City of Melville on this matter has the appropriate authorisation as required by the state and federal electoral Acts?
- (3) Does the minister consider that such expenditure by the City of Melville outside its local government area is a legitimate use of ratepayers' funds?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:

- (1) I am advised that \$300 000 was allocated in the City of Melville's 2004-05 budget for a Fremantle eastern bypass retention education campaign. I understand that on 21 September 2004, the council approved the program for this campaign, which appears to include among its target audience people living outside the city of Melville.
- (2) The city has indicated that it has not published any campaign material at this stage but will ensure that any published material is duly authorised under the relevant electoral laws. Any failure to do so will of course be a matter for the state or commonwealth electoral commissions.
- (3) Under the Local Government Act 1995, local governments can expend funds on matters they consider to be in the interests of the good government of persons in their district. The Department of Local Government and Regional Development has previously examined the expenditure of funds by the City of Melville on a campaign opposing the deletion of the Fremantle eastern bypass. Its advice was that the expenditure was not in breach of the Local Government Act. However, I believe that local governments should be very careful if funds are spent outside their local government areas. I think that the appropriateness of this action will ultimately be decided by the electors of the city of Melville at the May 2005 local government elections.