

LOCAL GOVERNMENT, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

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

- (1) Is the Minister for Local Government aware of an article in the 7 December edition of the *Melville City Herald*? It reads -

Melville mayor Katie Mair says the use of council dollars to fund the independent Save Our Suburbs group is a “cause for concern”.

For the past few months council has been running ratepayer-funded advertisements in the *Melville Times* newspaper under the heading “Save Our Suburbs”.

The council denies funding the group, saying the Save Our Suburbs ad heading is a coincidence. But Ms Mair understands the funding is being taken from CEO John McNally’s discretionary account.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Is this a lecture or a question?

Hon JIM SCOTT: I am just quoting the remark because I think it is very pertinent to the question.

The PRESIDENT: I trust that we will get to the question.

Hon JIM SCOTT: It is almost complete. It continues -

“I can understand the concern in the community about the Save our Suburbs committee which is not a committee of council, yet it is receiving funding from council and that is a cause for concern,” she told the *Herald*.

- (2) Is it appropriate for local government chief executive officers to have such an account; what guidelines govern its use; and what can the money be used for?
- (3) Is the chief executive officer required to provide the council with full disclosure of this expenditure?
- (4) Is the minister concerned that this expenditure is providing funding to a group which appears to consist almost entirely of council officers, members of the council and current and past Liberal members of Parliament and their staff?

Hon TOM STEPHENS replied:

- (1) The Department of Local Government and Regional Development advises that it has received complaints on this matter and will provide advice to me once it has looked into the allegations.
- (2) The role of a local government is to provide for the good government of the people of its district. The role of the chief executive officer of a local government is to manage the day-to-day operation of the local government. If the council believes that good management can be enhanced by providing the CEO with discretionary funds to manage the day-to-day operation, it is entitled to provide those funds.
- (3) Accountability for the expenditure by the CEO of discretionary funds would be as directed by the council.
- (4) It is not appropriate for me to comment until I have received advice from the department on its assessment.