

Mr David Templeman; Ms Eleni Evangel; Acting Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Tony Simpson; Mr Shane Love; Ms Margaret Quirk; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Paul Miles; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr Bill Johnston; Speaker; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Frank Alban; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr P

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — AMALGAMATIONS

Motion

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [4.15 pm]: I move —

That this house advises the government that it does not support its forced council amalgamations process in the metropolitan area.

We understand that tomorrow—if not tomorrow, then within the next few days—the Minister for Local Government will make an announcement about the future of local government in Western Australia. In this case, the announcement will be about the local government boundaries that will be created for the Perth metropolitan area. When the minister makes the announcement about the new boundaries based on the recommendations of the Local Government Advisory Board, it must be very clearly understood by members in this place and by communities throughout the metropolitan area and regional Western Australia that this process embarked upon by the Barnett government, which has its roots in the time of the previous minister in 2009, is based upon a broken promise and a lie. Before the 2013 election the sector specifically asked the Premier whether the Liberal Party, if returned to government, would force amalgamations in the metropolitan area. The Minister for Local Government, at an infamous breakfast witnessed by business leaders in Armadale and the member for Armadale, was forced to deny that there would be forced amalgamations, having previously said that there would be.

Dr A.D. Buti: Without being asked, he offered the information that there would be forced amalgamation.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: We know that 24 hours later he was forced to backpedal on that with the issue of a press release. That should have been a hint to many people, but many people in the sector took on trust the Premier's word. The Premier, in his actions after the March 2013 election, demonstrated that he would not only break that promise, but also embark upon a forced amalgamation process in the metropolitan area for local councils. As we know, since the March 2013 election, not only was the promise broken, but also the process engaged upon was added to in deceitfulness when, in March this year, the minister sought to bypass the mechanism in the Local Government Act known as the Dadour provisions, when he sought instead to use boundary changes to see the demise of councils and communities in the metropolitan area. Again, that was not only sneaky, but also deceitful, and again, like his Premier, the minister demonstrated that they cannot be trusted. They, in that action, will see that a number of communities will be denied their democratic right to have their say on what their community will look like. That is what that sneaky manoeuvre by this minister will do. We also know, as I have stated before, that the minister is famous for his only consistency —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr N.W. Morton): Member, sorry; I have just sought some advice from the Clerk on the use of the term “deceitful”. Were you referring to the minister when you used that term?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The government is deceitful—deceitful treatment of the people of the metropolitan area and the communities represented by those councils affected by the government's deceitful process.

The minister has failed to acknowledge that many councils recognise that reform is important, and, indeed, many councils support reform in local government. Many councils, such as the City of South Perth and the Town of Victoria Park, had already been engaged in very strong and effective dialogue, and were in fact working strongly towards a formal amalgamation of those two municipalities, which both have a proud history. What did the minister and this Premier do? Of course, they disregarded one of the important elements of the constitution of what makes up a city, town or municipality—that is, the use of natural boundaries and social communities of interest. The Premier, because he wanted to have his flagship stadium in the City of Perth rather than in the Town of Victoria Park, proposed and demanded a boundary change that not only is illogical, but also goes against one of the key criteria of boundary drawing. Despite the good faith of the Town of Victoria Park and the City of South Perth, an arbitrary decision made selfishly by the Premier would see an important asset not being part of that new municipality. That was another example of a deceitful approach to this reform program. Then we saw the minister, in his own backyard, turn his back on the very council on which he himself served, the Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale. He has turned his back on his own constituency and his own council. The people of Serpentine–Jarrahdale now face the prospect of either being totally absorbed by the City of Armadale or being split in half, with the southern portion south of Mundijong Road going to the Shire of Murray and the northern half going to the City of Armadale—all of this, of course, completely disregarding the fact that the Serpentine–Jarrahdale shire remains a key component of the Peel region.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 10 September 2014]

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All through this process the Premier and the minister, despite being asked, have never produced detailed costings or evidence-based analysis for why they have embarked on the forced amalgamation process. They have never been able to produce a firm business case for this. In fact, in many respects, the minister has asked the Local Government Advisory Board and his department to make up that business case after the new boundaries have been drawn. Then, the biggest slap in the face of all was in the May budget this year. The minister, after promising that money would be on the table from this Barnett government for the reform process, slapped the sector in the face once again by delivering in his portfolio's budget \$65 million for the reform process, but telling the sector that \$45 million of that would in fact be paid by it in the form of low-interest loans. He says the sector will pay for this; it will pay for the demise. The government has not got the exact figures of how much it will cost in total. The government does not even have a business case analysis for why what it is doing will deliver what it thinks it could deliver. Is it any wonder that the sector is divided, demoralised and deflated, and that communities in Canning, Serpentine–Jarrahdale, Cockburn, Ferndale, Lynwood, the hills, Kalamunda, Belmont and Mundaring—all of them—have been and feel totally deceived by this government? Not only have this minister and this Premier moved the goalposts consistently, they have based all of this process upon a broken promise and a lie to the people of Western Australia in the metropolitan area that they would not force amalgamations on them.

Tomorrow, in the next few days or next week, the minister will deliver and announce a series of new maps that will show the newly constituted council areas of the metropolitan area—around 15 or 16 municipalities will make up the greater metropolitan area of Perth. We know that many communities will fight this and have been asking what their local Liberal members' stance on this issue is. Some of them have been brave, such as the member for South Perth, who has represented his community. He has highlighted that the whole process was flawed and, to use his words, they were “led up the garden path”. Indeed, members in the other place, like the member for South Metropolitan Region Hon Simon O'Brien, simply said that they were hoodwinked.

Dr A.D. Buti: What's the position of the member for Belmont?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will come to the member for Belmont, because she is on shaky ground now. She just voted in the previous motion against the industry that is so important to her community in Belmont, and later on this afternoon or early this evening she will probably again vote against her own community of which she was even mayor. She is on shaky ground. She knows it too; she is very, very uncomfortable in that seat.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! Member for Swan Hills!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: We know that this minister and this Premier will not stop at the metropolitan area. Even at the Western Australian Local Government Association conference and annual general meeting held only in August, a few weeks back, the Minister for Local Government did not rule it out at all. All he said was at this stage—that is the key term—there are no plans. That is, of course, what set the National Party all a quiver. It knows that it was a willing participant in this process when the former Leader of the National Party, the member for Pilbara, was led down the garden path by the Premier with the so-called agreement that the government would not do anything in the regional areas if the National Party supported what was happening in the metropolitan area. The National Party now knows very, very clearly that this Premier cannot be trusted at all at his word. He promised the same thing before the March election. We have seen the Premier demonstrate it in his performances during question time, in public and in the media when he simply disregards the things that he has said. He even had the audacity to say that people do not really take much notice of election promises.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: That is what he said. People in the communities in the metropolitan area and in regional Western Australia will remember that the trust was broken once again by the Premier and his minister. They cannot trust them. They cannot trust what their local Liberal members say because, quite frankly, the local Liberal members are just mouthpieces for the Premier. Not all of them are; some of them are not. Some of them bravely speak out against him and get attacked in the media. Even people who are connected to staff members of the Premier are writing nasty letters to *The West Australian* because somebody might have said a few home truths. What I saw earlier this week in the letters column in *The West Australian* was amazing. One letter sought to attack the Leader of the Opposition, but of course there was also an underhanded and pathetic attack on the member for Hillarys. When we find out who the person was and the connection they have to the Premier, is it not an interesting example of what the Premier will stoop to?

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Mr D.J. Kelly: Dirty tricks.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Of course it is dirty tricks. However, the problem is that the Premier keeps throwing up these dirty tricks and members opposite, particularly the new members of the government backbench, swallow it hook, line and sinker. They file into the Liberal Party room and sit there with their big bug eyes looking up at the great emperor and all they do is listen to what he says and do exactly what he says. When anybody questions him—it is very rare; it might be one or two members—they turn on that person like raptors turning on a weaker one.

Mr M.H. Taylor interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: What is wrong with the member?

Mr M.H. Taylor interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: No; that is what happens. It is very disappointing.

Mr M.H. Taylor interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The member will have a chance to vote in a moment, but I bet I know what he will do.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! Member for Bateman!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: He sits up the back, flapping his gums —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: He will follow like a lemming to the slaughter.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, sit down! Member for Bateman, the member for Mandurah has not requested interjections, so I ask you to be quiet. Member for Mandurah, can you direct your comments through the Chair.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am very pleased to be protected by you, Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Carine!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The member for Carine is jumping in and having a go as well!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Through the Chair, member.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: He is having a go! They are all full of bull and bluster, but when it comes to the vote, they do not do anything. They follow the Premier, the little general —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah! Member for Carine, enough! Member for Mandurah, through the Chair.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: They file behind the little general because they do not want to upset him. I hear, of course, that they cannot even find the next Leader of the Liberal Party, because they have had a few dunces in the last little while.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Armadale!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The member for South Perth has got my vote.

Mr F.A. Alban interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Here we go. Duffy is up!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Swan Hills, I call you to order. Member for Mandurah, through the Chair, please.

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Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Vanderbilt has climbed up into the tower and said, “What’s happening here? I’d better contribute something.” The member for Swan Hills knows that I like him, but I hear that Matt Birney does not, and Matt Birney, who has been in this place, is circling like a vulture.

Point of Order

Ms E. EVANGEL: I thought that we were supposed to be talking about council amalgamations. I have not heard anything about council amalgamations in the past five minutes.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Ms E. EVANGEL: That is my point of order. Stick to the topic.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr N.W. Morton): Member for Armadale, I call you to order for the second time. Points of order will be heard in silence. Member for Mandurah, direct your comments through the Chair. I have asked you several times to direct your comments through the Chair. Interjections will be called to order. I will hear the member in silence, with relevance to the motion.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: How relevant is it to the member for Perth, who of course has just made one of the most important contributions she has made this year, and what she has said about council amalgamations? Let us look at what has happened in her little nest in Vincent. She has been scurrying around because she was sniffing the wind during the early processes —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Through the Chair.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am talking about what has happened in Vincent, a very important council.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I hear what you are saying.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: We know that the member for Perth was sniffing around when the proposal was to hive off part of the City of Vincent, but not all of it, into the City of Perth. The then Mayor of Vincent had a very strong view, which again was disregarded by the Minister for Local Government. The minister was quite happy to discuss the reform of the process, but the Premier kept saying that Vincent would be split and only the good bits of it would be kept for the City of Perth and the rest of it would be jettisoned into the neighbouring councils. This is what the Premier has done. He has led members up the garden path. He is like Andy Pandy; he has led them up the garden path. Members have to realise that this process has not only been flawed, but also disregarded the good faith that lots of people in the sector have.

The argument that we have put consistently is this: we went to the election saying that we would not force amalgamations, and we will not. It was a very clear policy position. We also recognise that this process, when we talk about divvying or slicing up communities, must involve the community and the communities that the government is seeking to change. The minister keeps saying that streets and neighbourhoods will not change, but he disregards the fact that although he asked people to make submissions and be part of the process and went to meetings with them and reassured them, he changed his behaviour completely afterwards and told them something else. That is why he is seen as being sneaky when he decides that rather than triggering the Dadour provisions, he will instead use boundary changes to achieve a forced amalgamation, thus dispensing with any chance for the local community to have a say. That is why people do not trust the minister anymore. It has been a breach of trust.

The other thing the minister has forgotten is that this issue goes to the heart of communities and people and their neighbourhoods and their jobs. Although the minister might say that some employment has been guaranteed for two years or that assurances have been provided about change, the fact is that many people in the sector do not know whether they will have a job in a newly constituted council come 2015–16, and that is a major concern for them.

The other point I want to make is that the minister has not allowed the communities to have a direct say and has not recognised that the local communities are an important and integral part of the determination of their own identity, their representation and their needs. I know that the minister has said a lot of different things to a lot of different people. Some of those things are going to come back and bite him, just like his infamous comments at the Armadale breakfast before the election in February 2013. However, this whole process is now based upon a total lack of trust. It is based upon a total disdain for democracy. When the Dadour Group and the councils of Subiaco, Nedlands and others say that this is a blight on democracy, they are right. I will highlight a couple of

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points raised by people in the community. The first is in an email from the Dadour Group in which Malcolm Mummery says —

The Dadour Group is particularly pleased to see the House addressing the process Mr Simpson adopted. It well derives scrutiny as it has seen Executive Government being deceptive and coercive and in other ways putting fundamentals of our system of government at jeopardy.

I also received an email today from Yvonne Hart of the Cottesloe Ratepayers' Association. In her email she highlights that —

- the National Party MPs endorsed a similar motion

That is to the one that I have moved today, and I would expect, as I am sure would Ms Hart, that the National Party will support this motion. She also says that legal action that has been initiated by Ian Ker and joined by a number of councils is currently before the Supreme Court, and that the legal action is financially supported by a number of other metropolitan local councils. She also states —

- there is widespread opposition from mayors, administrators and residents who oppose the local government reform process.

...

Of major concern is the way in which the Minister has sought to artificially evade the poll provisions of Schedule 2.1 of the Local Government Act – not only in breach of the specific provisions of the Act but also in total opposition to one of the stated intentions of the Act ... which is to achieve 'greater community participation in the decisions and affairs of local governments'.

This is written by a person who is a resident in the Premier's own electorate. She finishes by stating —

The amalgamation process has been shambolic. You

As in the Labor Party —

have our full support for the motion and urge your members to support and defeat this thoroughly undemocratic process put in place by the Liberal Party.

We have 21 members on this side of the house, so to pass this motion today we need the National Party to join with us and to put its money where its mouth is and demonstrate as parliamentary members their support for what was urged on them by their lay membership at the conference in Margaret River on the weekend. We will also need some additional Liberal Party members to cross the floor. Some Liberal Party members have bravely spoken out, and I have mentioned a couple of them, but of course the proof of the pudding will be when we come to a vote and for them to actually put their money where their mouth is. That is the challenge for members tonight. Of course, I have already heard rumours that an amendment will be moved by somebody from the Liberal Party or the National Party. That will be very disappointing because this motion is quite simple and clear. Members opposite might toy with the motion and amend it to make it look like the government has done the right thing and gone through an appropriate and democratic process, but the punters out there will know that that is not the truth. Punters in the electorates of Belmont, Perth, Mount Lawley and Serpentine–Jarrahdale, or even the hills electorates of the member for Darling Range and the Leader of the House —

Mr M.H. Taylor: And Melville.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I have not started on Melville. Let us talk about the member for Riverton and the interesting situation he put himself in, once again peddling the government line and then back-peddling as fast as he could because he started to feel the backlash from his own community. He has been caught out. There are some very well organised community organisations within the seat of Riverton and they will remember this at the next election. They will remember that their local Liberal member did not stand up for their community and their concerns. They will remember the flyers he sent out trying to qualify the government's position, knowing full well that those words were hollow, and this proposed reform will be remembered.

The Leader of the Opposition will be speaking shortly and I hope a number of other members on this side will speak but, of course, we intend to take this motion to a vote before 7.00 pm. Why are we doing that?

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: We are doing this to hold the Premier to account for the deceitful way he has treated the various communities in the metropolitan area through his forced amalgamation process. That is what the

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Premier has done, so we will hold him to account. We will ask members on his side of the house who have grave concerns about this process —

Withdrawal of Remark

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr N.W. Morton): Order, member! You just referred to the Premier as being deceitful so I ask you to withdraw that statement please.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: If I said that, I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Some of the Premier's members who have bravely spoken out will be given the opportunity to demonstrate that they actually support their communities and recognise the effect that this proposed reform will have, is having, and has been having on them.

I conclude by saying that some communities such as those in Canning have been almost totally disenfranchised by this whole process because the City of Canning has been under suspension and a commissioner has been in place. The views of that community would not have been heard had it not been for the remarkable stewardship of Linton Reynolds as the commissioner who sought to inform the community of the process. The problem with the process for those people in the City of Canning in particular is that they have had little opportunity to have their concerns heard because they have no elected members. The process that the minister has set up has particularly disenfranchised many of those citizens.

Dr A.D. Buti: And the Treasurer vilified Mr Reynolds.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: He did; the Treasurer attacked Mr Reynolds. Mr Reynolds was not only a former mayor of Armadale, a councillor and a contributor to local government over many years, but also a very well respected man across party lines because of his integrity. It was actually the Liberal Treasurer in this place, the member for Riverton, who sought to denigrate Mr Reynolds when all he did was make sure that his community that he is effectively administrating as the commissioner was told the truth.

I will look forward to the vote to see where and how members from the other side vote. The Labor Party will be voting very strongly for this motion, and we will also articulate continuously that we remain opposed to forced amalgamations. Members in regional Western Australia cannot gain any sense of security from this minister's words because the trust has already been betrayed. The trust in this Premier has been betrayed and trust in this minister has been betrayed.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [4.49 pm]: I rise to support the commentary of the member for Mandurah, the shadow Minister for Local Government. If members read the motion, it is a simple straightforward motion that the house can either indicate its support of the forced amalgamation of local governments in the metropolitan area or its opposition. Here is an opportunity for members to express their point of view on a very straightforward and simple motion before the house. I thought the member for Mandurah said a lot of very relevant and sensible things. The most relevant and sensible thing was that this has been an absolutely shambolic and dysfunctional process.

Mr C.J. Barnett: No-one is listening.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Premier is listening.

Mr C.J. Barnett: No, I am dozing.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Premier might be dozing; he does that regularly.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I work hard.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Obviously, the Premier will stay here and amuse people all night!

It has been a shambolic and dysfunctional process to get to this point. We understand that tomorrow—probably in order to get over today's shambolic and dysfunctional performance—the Minister for Local Government will release the plans produced by the Local Government Advisory Board. That will be tomorrow's effort. When it comes to shambolic and dysfunctional processes, this one is up there with the management of environmental approvals by the government, whereby it has had to bring in validating legislation for billions of dollars of approvals under the Environmental Protection Act because it has messed things up on conflict-of-interest grounds. We had that disaster today, and tomorrow we will have the disaster of the broken promise on local government forced amalgamations coming out. It is saying something when I put this in the top 10 of the

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government's broken promises. There are a lot more than 10, but this is up there in the top 10 of the government's broken promises.

The Premier said before the 2013 election that there would be no forced amalgamations. The Premier said that a week before people voted. The Minister for Local Government, then a humble backbencher, put out a press release saying that there would be forced amalgamations. I have a copy of it in my office. He went out there and told the truth and then was told by the Premier's office, "You can't say that", so he then put out a press release saying, "No forced amalgamations." The Premier himself put out a newsletter in his own electorate and told his constituents there would be no forced amalgamations. He was denying the obvious. It is a forced amalgamation. Then when the opposition raised it in this house and I asked that if councils came together without a referendum, would that be a forced amalgamation, the Premier said, "No, it's not." Again, this is "Barnett world". It must be a great world to be in where you are always right and everyone else is always wrong. The Premier is always right and everyone else is always wrong and he can never be held to account for what he has said before.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Have a try! Go for it! Give it your best shot.

Mr M. McGOWAN: There is only one person in "Barnett world" and the Premier is it. In "Barnett world" the Premier is always right and everyone else is always wrong and he cannot be held to account for anything he has ever said before. We are holding the Premier to account once again today on this issue. This is actually the sixth occasion the opposition has raised this issue in this house. Guess what? Despite all the protestations by people that they do not really support this process and that this has been bad, with Liberal Party members saying they have been conned and misled and National Party members out there saying they do not support it, not once in the previous five occasions have any members opposite crossed the floor. Today we have lucky six. Members can vote to support a non-forced amalgamation policy for councils. This is a chance for members to stand for what they have said. This is a chance for members of the National Party. I read all the press last week and on the weekend. The National Party says it will stand up on this issue; it does not support forced council amalgamations because of what has been said will happen in the country after this. Here is their chance! National Party members have a chance to say that they do not support forced amalgamations in the city.

Had the government gone to the election—only 18 months ago—and said that it will be amalgamating councils across Western Australia, that it has a forced amalgamation process because it believes there are too many councils at the moment —

Mr C.J. Barnett: Said all that!

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Premier did not! There we go again—"Barnett world". What a beautiful world it must be.

Mr J.H.D. Day: Better than yours!

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Leader of the House is awake—in fact, he is alive!

Mr C.J. Barnett: Leader of the Opposition, tell me which particular forced amalgamation you are referring to?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The 15 across Perth.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Name one! There are 30 councils now; tell us where the forced one is. Just give us one.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Here we are; the Premier wants me to educate him—he is unaware.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr N.W. Morton): Members, so far debate on this motion has been conducted reasonably well. I would hate for it to deteriorate and I would like to hear the Leader of the Opposition; he has the call.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The government is amalgamating South Perth and Victoria Park, and Perth and Vincent.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I appreciate the assistance.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Only a few seconds ago I was on my feet for this exact reason. Member for Bassendean, I will call you to order for the second time. There was someone interjecting on the government side, but I did not quite catch who it was.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It was the Premier!

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Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Colleagues, I would like to hear the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It was the Premier!

The ACTING SPEAKER: I will make that determination. I could not work out who it was on this side.

Mr M. McGOWAN: He could own up, Mr Acting Speaker, and not let other people face the consequences of your wrath.

Tomorrow the minister will reveal the Local Government Advisory Board report.

Mr J.H.D. Day: Will he?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Perhaps the minister can enlighten us. Will it be tomorrow?

Mr A.J. Simpson: I will stand up.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Excellent; the minister will inform us what he is up to. We will find out exactly what the Local Government Advisory Board recommends. As the minister constantly says, he can only accept or reject; he cannot amend. He can accept or reject the recommendations of the report. I have heard the Premier say numerous times that it was originally going to be 14 councils across Perth, but he is now saying that it will be between 14 and 17—so he has moved a little on that. The Premier has pre-empted the outcomes of the Local Government Advisory Board report, which will arrive tomorrow. If we go down from the roughly 30 councils we have now to 14 to 17, of course the government is amalgamating councils. The government is abolishing councils.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Where's the force?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will tell members, and this is the central point. No-one gets a say; they do not get the opportunity for a vote.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Numerous meetings.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Let us get this straight. The Premier said there would be between 14 and 17 councils only. Now he says these are not forced amalgamations—even though he is roughly halving the number—because people have the opportunity of a meeting. Again, it is “Barnett world”. In his world that is democracy. People get the chance to have a meeting to discuss an outcome that is already predetermined. That outcome, which is already predetermined, is 14 to 17 councils across Perth down from 30. That apparently is democracy—people get to have a meeting. Under the law as it currently stands, and reaffirmed in the Local Government Act 1995, an amendment to the act in the 1970s provided an opportunity for a sufficient number of electors to request a referendum. If more than 50 per cent of people vote in a council referendum, and more than 50 per cent of people vote against amalgamation, the process is dropped. That is a democratic system.

Mr A.J. Simpson: No, it's not.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The minister says it is not a democratic system to get a vote. You guys really do not understand the concept of people having a say. The Premier said before the last election that there would be no forced amalgamations. These are forced amalgamations. It is a denial of the democratic process and a denial of the English language to say any different. The government has ignored the spirit of the act.

Mr A.J. Simpson: You cannot ignore the act!

Mr M. McGOWAN: Will the minister give people an opportunity for a vote?

Mr A.J. Simpson: It is up to the advisory board.

Mr M. McGOWAN: So that is a question for the advisory board.

Mr A.J. Simpson: The advisory board will determine it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: If the advisory board recommends a referendum, will the minister offer a referendum?

Mr A.J. Simpson: I can only accept. I can only reject. They cannot amend it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: If the board does not offer the opportunity to have a referendum, what will the minister do?

Mr A.J. Simpson: I can only accept. I can only reject.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 10 September 2014]

p6015b-6042a

Mr David Templeman; Ms Eleni Evangel; Acting Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Tony Simpson; Mr Shane Love; Ms Margaret Quirk; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Paul Miles; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr Bill Johnston; Speaker; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Frank Alban; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr P

Mr M. McGOWAN: The minister can reject and then he can say, “Come back with the opportunity of a referendum.” That would be democratic.

Mr C.J. Barnett: This whole debate is hypothetical.

Mr M. McGOWAN: There the Premier goes again. In the Premier’s world, at a local government level, he would be making councils sovereign governments—abolishing them and bringing them together.

Mr C.J. Barnett: They are not sovereign governments.

Mr M. McGOWAN: If they are not sovereign governments, what are they?

Mr C.J. Barnett: They are subsets of the state government. They are not sovereign.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! Member for Armadale, you are on two calls. Member for Wanneroo, I think you have already been called today. There are several members on multiple calls. Can I hear the Leader of the Opposition in silence, please.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Many of those local governments have been around for a long period. It is true that they are creatures of state legislation. At a local level, they are regarded as a sort of sovereign government. That is my view. I actually served in local government, unlike the Premier. I understand its relevance locally, and people regard it as significant. That is why thousands of people rallied outside Parliament asking for the opportunity to have a vote if they are going to lose their local council. That is why all this disputation is going on now. That is why a Supreme Court challenge is going on now. That is why people are unhappy about what has gone on up to this point. The Premier describes it as a hypothetical debate. If it is a hypothetical debate and he will not force amalgamations, what is the problem with voting for the motion? If he is saying that there are no forced amalgamations, he should vote for the motion. If they are not forced amalgamations, he would have no trouble voting for this motion—and neither would any government members who have spoken out in their local communities, but when it comes to the opportunity to vote in this place, I guarantee that none of them will have the courage to cross the floor and vote with us on this issue.

I know that the Nationals were out there on the weekend. Last week I saw that one of the National Party MPs said that when the laws go through this place and into the upper house, they will be voting against those laws.

Mr C.J. Barnett: What laws?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Indeed: That is what I said when I was asked by the press. What laws?

Mr C.J. Barnett: What laws? There won’t be any.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Exactly. That is what I am saying.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I can’t think of any laws.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I cannot think of any laws, either.

Mr C.J. Barnett: What is the motion about then?

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is not the motion. The point I am making —

Mr C.J. Barnett: You have no idea what you’re talking about. You’re just so far ahead of the game —

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am far ahead of the game. Excellent. Thank you, Premier.

Mr C.J. Barnett: — to be ridiculous.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The point I am making is that the National Party has done two things. First, it misled the press last week. It misled the state’s media into thinking that laws would be passed by this house and the upper house. That is true. Second, it went to its state conference and said that it does not support forced amalgamations in the metropolitan area. This is the National Party’s opportunity. Its members voted for it in cabinet. They supported the process in cabinet.

Mr C.J. Barnett: How do you know? There’s no process.

Mr M. McGOWAN: There must be a process in cabinet. I assume people get to have a say in cabinet.

Mr C.J. Barnett: There has been no forced amalgamation debate in cabinet.

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Mr M. McGOWAN: All right, Premier. In the Premier's world, they are not forced amalgamations. Is that how he defines this?

Mr C.J. Barnett: You're talking about laws that don't exist. You're talking about cabinet decisions that have not happened because you're not there. I don't think you ever will be in cabinet.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Premier deliberately verbals and misleads the house. He sets up straw men and arguments that he says are being run are not actually being run. The point I am making is that the National Party misled the press in relation to laws being passed through Parliament. No laws are being passed through Parliament. None of that is going on here. There is a motion before the house. If the National Party wants to be consistent with what it said on the weekend, it would vote for this motion. This is the National Party's opportunity. It got the television coverage on the weekend—on Saturday night. It got articles in the papers on the weekend. Here is its chance. The opposition has given it the opportunity to be consistent with what it said because it misled people when it said there would be laws because there are no laws. Even that level of democratic process is not on offer here. There are no laws on offer. There are no laws for us to debate, consider in detail and then vote on. None of those processes are here. This amalgamation process does not even have that level of democracy.

What has been happening in various communities? I was in Kalamunda recently. It is a wildly unhappy community.

Mrs G.J. Godfrey: Were you sneaking around?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I put out a press release, I had a meeting with a big group of people, I walked through the shopping centre and I had lunch. If that is sneaking around, I think the member for Belmont might want to reconsider her definition.

The people of Kalamunda are wildly unhappy. There is all this signage about this forced amalgamation process up there anti the Minister for Planning. People in Canning are very unhappy about the forced abolition of their local government. The local member for Riverton is writing to people and saying that they have a choice between going to Gosnells or Melville. His pick is Melville because there are no other choices. He is saying that people have the choice of retaining the council they have or they can vote on whether it gets amalgamated with another council. He is saying that that does not exist in correspondence he sent to his electors throughout his electorate.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr M. McGOWAN: The City of Cockburn was voted the most sustainable council in Australia by the Australian Local Government Association. It is getting completely demolished; it is proposed that it be split into three. The Town of Vincent is the inner-urban high-density council created by the Court government in 1994. The Premier sat at the cabinet table at that time. He was the deputy Liberal leader. The Town of Vincent, created by Richard Court and the then government, is getting abolished as well without the opportunity for a referendum. These things are going on all over Perth, and the Premier wonders why people are unhappy. They are unhappy, first, because they are not getting a say; second, because the government is breaking an election promise; and, third, because the most recent experience of amalgamations in this state means that rates go up significantly. I was in Geraldton on the weekend and people were talking to me about it because that is where it happens. The fourth reason people are unhappy is that the government is breaching the Robson review. We have had one major review into this issue. It came out with a set of recommendations that the government is ignoring. All those things come together.

All we are saying to the house today, with all the National Party's protestations on the weekend, all of this misleading conduct about the opportunity to vote on legislation on this matter, is that because we do not have that opportunity, we will give members that opportunity today. Members have expressed concern. I think the member for South Perth described it as a con or a subterfuge or something to that effect. To those members of the National Party and all those members who are unhappy about it, today is their big chance—they missed it at other times—to either vote in favour of no forced amalgamations or vote against forced amalgamations. If they vote the opposite of this motion, they will vote in favour of forced amalgamations.

MR A.J. SIMPSON (Darling Range — Minister for Local Government) [5.10 pm]: I thank the member for the opportunity to put something on the record about the metropolitan local government reform process. Getting back to where we started, this government has not changed anything in the Local Government Act to make it easier to do any part of this reform. Every bit of this process has used the Local Government Act as it stands

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today. All the talk about the Local Government Advisory Board and whether the reform is a boundary adjustment or an amalgamation is all in the Local Government Act 1995. Clearly, we used the current legislation to get the outcome of where we want local government to be. I could talk for hours about the number of reports that have been done. I will touch on a few interesting reports in a minute. There are reports that refer to the history of local government, reports on sustainability, the Robson report and other reports going back to the 1990s, 1980s and 1970s on the history of this process and determining where local government needs to be. The most important thing about local government is to ensure that we look to the future so that our local governments are in the right position for growth. Western Australia is undergoing a huge amount of growth. In 2050, three and a half million people will call WA home. That is quite a considerable increase on the population we have today. The increase in population growth is running at around six to eight per cent a year, which will have a big impact. We have to ensure that our local governments are sustainable and can deliver services now and into the future, because 75 per cent of the population will live in the metropolitan area. We need to provide more sporting grounds, recreation facilities, shopping centres, subdivisions and all the things that make a good community. It is important to ensure that local governments are sustainable now and into the future. It is about creating a blueprint to keep them at the point at which they are sustainable. A lot of work has been done on this.

The Leader of the Opposition touched on rates. I referred to this graph in Parliament the other week. On the graph, of the 30 local governments in the metropolitan area, at the end of the scale, the largest local government has on average the lowest rate increase and the lowest rates. This is because bigger local governments can deliver better services and can build on those with economies of scale—I like to use the words—to ensure that local government is sustainable now and into the future. On 30 July this year, the front page of *The West Australian* had a story about how expensive rates are. *The West Australian* ran that story because local governments had increased their rates by seven to eight per cent. Ten or 15 years ago, a person's rates were under \$1 000—only a few hundred bucks—and adding seven to eight per cent to that was not a huge increase. Now, rates are close to a median of \$2 000 per average rates notice, and an additional seven or eight per cent is quite a big hit of \$150. With fees and charges for rubbish collection, a person could get an increase of around \$200 a year in their rates notice. Now, economies of scale need to work more than ever. We are trying to build economies of scale so local governments can deliver their services with the money from the rates notices they send out.

Referring to the graph again, it shows that the six smallest local governments rely on financial assistance grants—FAGs—in order to operate. This is because the amount of money those councils make from their rates is not enough to operate the business of the day. They rely on financial assistance grants to turn on the lights, and use fees and charges —

Mr D.A. Templeman: A lot of regional councils rely totally on grants.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: Yes. I will talk about that in a minute.

That is what they rely on to keep the business going. Looking at building up what I call a local government's economies of scale, at the level of 50 000 people, the rate base gets to parity and starts running in overflow—and at 100 000 people, the council is at what is called “run over the top of the hill” and runs along quite smoothly. A classic example is the City of Stirling. It is the biggest metropolitan council in Perth and has an annual budget of \$260 million to devise and deliver projects. At the other end of the scale, there is the area that I represent, Serpentine–Jarrahdale, which has a budget of \$23 million and brings in \$15.8 million in rates. Next door to the Serpentine–Jarrahdale local government is the City of Armadale, which is probably one of the most successful local governments in the metropolitan area and has a budget of \$100 million. It is clear that we need to ensure that we have good quality local governments together and we need to get the economies of scale to work to put downward pressure on rate increases. It is also very important not to lose the community of interest. The local government reform process has carefully tried to bring local governments together without losing too much of the existing community. It is always harder outside the metropolitan area, because the areas get bigger. It is important that we try to get a balance of a regional centre and a fringe council coming together to ensure that we build economies of scale and get that money to the outer areas. The outer metropolitan councils bear the full brunt of urbanised growth, and it puts pressure on local governments. Greenfields growth will suck a council dry of all its money, as brand-new rooftops mean more money for roads, infrastructure, sporting grounds and community facilities. An inner-city council with infill has infrastructure already in place and gets more rate base by infilling, and it has to only upgrade facilities, not build them from scratch. That is why we have the Outer Metropolitan Growth Council that lobbies state and federal governments very hard to get money for that

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process. To recap, it is important to build economies of scale without losing the community of interest. Again, we are planning not for today or tomorrow, but for the next 10 to 15 years.

It was pointed out that we have already gone through this process with the City of Perth carve-up in 1994. I think that that process went well. It got the City of Perth to focus on the City of Perth; leaving the suburb of City Beach to the Town of Cambridge, leaving out the Towns of Vincent and Victoria Park. In the last 20-odd years, the City of Perth has flourished and grown, and there has been a lot of focus on it. Only 10 000 people live in the City of Perth. There are 20 000 people in the Town of Vincent. We are trying to give more grunt to the inner-city suburbs and give them more of a city feel without losing those economies of scale. I was told that the old City of Perth had money running out to suburbs instead of being used to focus on the city. Also, I refer to the Cities of Wanneroo and Joondalup. Member for Wanneroo, when did the City of Joondalup start?

Mr P.T. Miles: It was in 1999.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: The City of Joondalup now has 160 000 residents and the City of Wanneroo has 180 000 residents. Both have very good economies of scale, are working well and have some good community of interest, but I could envisage the City of Wanneroo being divided again one day in the future in order to build economies of scale and to have good local government. We are trying to do the same in other metropolitan areas. Again, we are focusing on what they will look like in the future.

I touched a little bit on country reform. I am very, very conscious of this area. I have walked in the front door of 65 of the 138 local governments in Western Australia, met with the councils and had discussions. I regularly hold a round-table lunch for 10 mayors and presidents from all over the state, both metro and country, to meet me and the president of the Western Australian Local Government Association and have a general discussion. I have probably held about 10 or 12 of them. I do the same with Local Government Managers Australia, the chief executive officers and the community sector, with the Western Australian Council of Social Service. At the last lunch, I sat down with the president of the Shire of Morawa. Karen commented that the freezing of the FAGs means she will have cut back on services because she has lost money. She told me that the council has to put in \$400 000 to provide a doctor for the town. She told me she has to do that, otherwise the town does not get a doctor. Other areas in which country councils have to deliver services include policing, teachers, nursing and dental services. The further out in the bush the councils are, the more rate money they have to put in to deliver services. Clearly, building economies of scale does not quite work in the regional areas, because one needs to sit down and look at the regional area. WALGA is doing a fair bit of work on this at the moment. Every time I speak to regional councils, I say, "Whatever happens in this process, we have to get back to the service delivery model." In regional offices, there is one person doing four jobs, whereas there will be one person for each of those four jobs in Perth.

They are borrowing and sharing and doing everything they can to make sure that they can deliver services as best they can. I asked the regional local governments how we will deliver services better. Reforming those regional areas is not about building commerce or amalgamation; it will be based on trying to deliver a service model. That is the difference between the two. Every single one of the 30 metropolitan councils has quite sustainable growth. A couple of years ago my local council advertised that it had 44 per cent growth in one year. That is an incredible amount of growth for a council in the metropolitan area. Once we travel further out, we see that local governments are struggling to hang onto their rate base and schools. It is the domino effect and it goes on and on. That is why I said that there was no time frame. When I meet with local governments, I know that some work needs to be done. It is more important that, as a government, we look at how we can support those regional councils to make sure that they can keep delivering services to their community and the ratepayers. It is not about the reform process in the country; it is about service delivery.

The important question is: what is our reason behind this reform process? Members opposite have said that we have not done a business case or anything of that sort. Over the years a number of reviews have tried to identify the best path to reform. In 1953 a departmental report on local government boundaries recommended a reduction to 11 or 19 local governments; in 1968 the Local Government Assessment Committee conducted a statewide review and recommended reducing the number of councils from 144 to 89; in 1972 the Local Government Boundaries Commission recommended reducing the number of councils in the metropolitan area from 26 to 18; in 1974 the Royal Commission on Metropolitan Municipal Boundaries recommended a reduction in metropolitan councils from 26 to 18; in 1996 the Structural Reform Advisory Committee conducted a review; and another review was undertaken in 2006. The process has gone on and on.

Mr David Templeman; Ms Eleni Evangel; Acting Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Tony Simpson; Mr Shane Love; Ms Margaret Quirk; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Paul Miles; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr Bill Johnston; Speaker; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Frank Alban; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr P

Mr D.A. Templeman: All we said was that if you believe there should be X number of councils, what economic argument is that based on? What will it cost and what is the process?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: Let us touch on a couple of issues. The member asked what the reform will cost. That is a very good question. If we were to ask local government what it costs to deliver services, each local government would tell us a different cost. What is the cost of reform? I can guarantee that each government will be different to a certain degree. One size does not fit all.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Are you going to put money on the table when you make your announcement?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: There is money on the table in the budget.

Mr D.A. Templeman: That is loans.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: No, there is \$15 million in grants and \$45 million in loans. Today there was an announcement about local government reform in New South Wales. I do not know whether the member for Mandurah caught that.

Mr D.A. Templeman: I did.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: He caught that. The member would have seen quite clearly that local government reform in New South Wales is expected to cost \$258 million. I did a quick calculation of New South Wales' current position. There are 152 local councils and 14 country councils in New South Wales. Forty-one of those councils are in the Sydney metropolitan area. New South Wales will provide \$153 million for the reform of those 41 metropolitan councils, which is \$3.73 million per council. The Western Australian government has allocated \$60 million to local government reform, so each new entity will be funded about \$3.7 million. New South Wales is allocating the same amount of money per council in its reform process as Western Australia is allocating to new entities in its reform process. The reality is that we are right in the ballpark of where we need to be. I will ask the New South Wales state government what research it did to determine funding.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: Let us think about it. The opposition is saying that the government must pay for local government reform. One thing is very, very clear to the ratepayers of Western Australia: the government gets its money from taxes. The state government then spends money from the taxpayers' pocket. Therefore, the member for Mandurah is telling me that I should either take money out of the taxpayers' pocket to give to the local governments to conduct the reform process or take it out of the ratepayers' pocket. Last time I checked, it is the same pocket. Whom are we taking it from? At the end of the day, all the money on the table comes from the taxpayer or the ratepayer. The funding for local government reform in WA is similar to what New South Wales has put on the table for its local government reform. We are trying to work out the business case.

The interesting part is that we are now in the final stages. This morning I received the first section of the report by the Local Government Advisory Board.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Can I look at it?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: No. The member cannot look at it because I have received the first 10 proposals, so there are still more to come. As the member is very much aware, the advisory board has re-advertised for a couple of proposals and it will finish those next Tuesday. I will wait to get that report and then I will take it to cabinet. As soon as I can, I will go back out to the sector.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: No, I do not have it all yet, as two proposals are being re-advertised. I will wait for those to be finished before we look at it. From my initial look at the first section of the report, I can see that a lot of work has been done. The Local Government Advisory Board has looked at the detail and conducted financial analyses of local governments based on their budgets, asset replacement and debt ratio rates. It is a very thorough and nice document that is worth reading. I think a lot of local governments will be very surprised at the outcome.

Mr D.A. Templeman: No report tomorrow?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: No.

Mr D.A. Templeman: So I can stay in bed?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: The member for Mandurah can stay in bed. The member has to be here at 9.00 am, though.

Mr David Templeman; Ms Eleni Evangel; Acting Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Tony Simpson; Mr Shane Love; Ms Margaret Quirk; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Paul Miles; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr Bill Johnston; Speaker; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Frank Alban; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr P

Mr D.A. Templeman: I was thinking about staying here overnight and sleeping in the Speaker's corridor!

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: That has been done. I remember the member for Pilbara late one night put his head on his desk for a couple of hours and woke up at 3.00 o'clock in the morning wondering where everyone had gone.

We have been working on this reform under the Local Government Act 1995. We have not changed any part of the Local Government Act to make it any easier to do this reform process. The act clearly refers to boundary adjustments and amalgamation. The legislation clearly states that if we dissolve two or more districts, a poll will be called. Therefore, we cannot get out of conducting a poll in some of these local government amalgamations. We do not need to be rocket scientists to work that out.

I will make one thing very clear: the poll is undemocratic. For example, the Shire of Peppermint Grove in the western suburbs would have 1 133 voters; a boundary adjustment to that local government area would affect seven other councils, but if the Shire of Peppermint Grove had a successful vote, the other six local governments would not have the opportunity to have a say because the decision would have been made for them by another local government. That is not fair in anyone's book. That is not democratic.

I will touch on a few issues with the Robson report. The Robson report was quite scathing of local government. We have touched a bit on where local government sits; is it the third tier of government? It is not in the Australian Constitution. It is an arm of the state government. Every local law has to go through the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation. If a council's rates increase by twice the rate of inflation, it has to go to either the minister or the department to sign off on it. They are an arm of state government. The Robson report identified a couple of things. It stated that voting in local government elections should be compulsory, which is very interesting. Because voting is not compulsory, on average only 27 per cent of ratepayers vote at election time. Depending on how small a local government area is, someone could ring a few cousins or mates to help them get voted in. If they are in the metropolitan area, they could work in a couple of the small squeaky-wheel community groups to get a seat on the council.

Keep in mind that I made an announcement in July in reply to the Robson report and I asked people to put in submissions by 4 October, and the local government elections were held on 19 October 2013. We would think that last year at the peak of the reform process there would have been a groundswell of people coming out to vote and some candidates would stand on the platform of anti-amalgamation. What did we get? We had the lowest number of votes in 10 years.

Mr D.A. Templeman: That was a vote of confidence in you.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: No. The golden rule in local government is that a high turnout of voters tells us that there is a problem in local government. If no-one votes and the same people get back in, the local government is going well.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: Exactly. If the wider community had been very anxious about the reform process in the metropolitan area, I would have expected to see a big jump in the number of people voting in local government elections last October when the reform process was fairly and squarely on the table. We would expect to see a good number of voters. During that election, the City of Vincent even ran a referendum on the reform process and still only 27 per cent, on average, voted in that election when we had the campaign on—one in, all in. We expected to see it higher than that.

Mr D.A. Templeman: You are scared of triggering the Dadour amendment.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: I am not scared of triggering the Dadour amendment.

Mr D.A. Templeman: You've avoided it.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: My proposal is only a one-off proposal; it is one of 12. There are now 43 proposals with the Local Government Advisory Board. I received the first report and another two proposals are yet to come in. The advisory board will decide whether a council has wards, whether its mayor is popularly elected, which proposal it will take up, and whether it involves a boundary adjustment or an amalgamation. The advisory board will do all that work and it will come back to me. It has a number of proposals before it and it has to pick one of those. At the end of this process, I will be interested to see how many of the 15, 16 or 17 proposals are mine. I would be surprised if any of them are my proposals after what I saw this morning.

Mr D.A. Templeman: How many did you see this morning?

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Mr A.J. SIMPSON: I saw somewhere between 10 and 12.

The Robson report also went down the road of popularly elected mayors, which is something that is very interesting in the metropolitan area. It is one of those areas in which I have seen good and bad, but the Robson report touched on compulsory voting and discussed popularly elected mayors. One of the sheer problems with local governments in the wider sector is that they are not truly representative of the whole vote.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza): Member for Warnbro, your comments have nothing to do with this debate.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker; I appreciate your protection from the opposition as a whole.

I want to read into *Hansard* some figures from the Systemic Sustainability Study report on local government that was done in 2008. It was done by the sector and this report is commonly referred to as the SSS report into local government. The interesting thing that I want to highlight is that all the other states have gone through some sort of reform process. This is not a new proposal; it has been around for a long time. It just needs the government of the day to have the guts to confront local government to try to resolve a number of these issues. Going through the numbers, I just spoke about New South Wales, which is now committed to going through a reform process next year throughout the whole state. It has 152 councils at the moment, and it hopes to go down to 41. Victoria has reduced the number of councils it has. It has gone from 210 in 1991 to 79 now. We know very well that Queensland has gone from 150 councils to 73, and South Australia has gone from 122 to 68. Western Australia, as we know, has 138 councils, and hopefully that will go down to 109 or 110 in the process. The interesting part is that Tasmania has even done some sort of reform process. Western Australia, along with New South Wales, is the only state that has not looked at its local government reform process. We need to go through this report to work out the best model for reform. I have spoken before about trying to build those communities. One of the first things I did in this job was look at the Queensland model. A couple of councils in Queensland are going through what is called a de-amalgamation. When we dig a bit deeper and look at why they are going through that process, we see that, quite clearly, they lost the community of interest. The councils were made way too big, getting to populations of 350 000-plus for local government areas. They were trying to really concentrate on the economies of scale, but along the way of trying to develop them, the community was lost. A couple of those areas in Queensland are looking to de-amalgamate; hence we look at our proposal. I think one model in the Robson report proposed nine councils, and a model with 14 councils was added to the list of proposals. We went through the process of replying from July to October last year, keeping in mind the fifth round of public submissions and trying to refine things. Even right now, two proposals for Cockburn and Kwinana, and Melville, are out there for public submissions, which close next Tuesday, to try to work out how to define the process. Again, there will be a sixth round of some sort of public submission process to try to get that balance. I will end up where I started this afternoon. The important part is making sure we build local government with a capacity for the future. It is important for us to look at where they will be in the future.

Mr P.C. Tinley: Popularly elected mayors—you sort of started with that but you did not complete it.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: One of the things the Robson report identified was popularly elected mayors and—this is interesting—the sector rejected it outright, just as it rejected compulsory voting. I can understand that. The reason is that if there is compulsory voting in local government elections, it walks party politics straight through the front door of the local council. If I wanted to run as a candidate in Fremantle, I would get a photo with the member for Fremantle, with the member saying what a good person I am, and that would walk me straight through the front door. That has happened in all the other states in Australia, and we end up with councils throughout the metropolitan area that are very much a clear political colour. I think in Western Australia we are very lucky to have an apolitical local government system.

Mr P.C. Tinley: Is the advisory board going to come back and say which model—popularly elected mayors or council elected?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: Yes, it will. The Local Government Advisory Board will give a summary of its findings and it will mention whether the mayor or president is popularly elected or council elected.

Mr P.C. Tinley: But not uniformly applied?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: No, each one will be different.

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[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 10 September 2014]

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Mr David Templeman; Ms Eleni Evangel; Acting Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Tony Simpson; Mr Shane Love; Ms Margaret Quirk; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Paul Miles; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr Bill Johnston; Speaker; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Frank Alban; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr P

Mr P.C. Tinley: An either-or system?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: Yes.

I think that is part of the process too. I have been very encouraged when I have worked with the sector on this issue. It is very, very keen to look at reform in the metropolitan area. More importantly, it is trying to embrace this reform process through change, but it is also trying to look at its own system and how it can best deliver services to ratepayers and what is the best model. As members can well imagine, through this reform process there will be areas that have wards. The majority will probably not have wards to start with, but there will be that job.

One of the other things I want to touch on is that as the two identities come together through this reform process, the first job they will have to do in October next year, once these new councils are elected and they have their mayor or president, is go through a number of processes. One thing will obviously be to come up with a new name. We have heard a number of them already. The advisory board will give them temporary names. When we cut up the City of Perth, Victoria Park was called Shepparton as a temporary name until the council was elected. The new council will have to look at that. Another thing will be to bring the new council logo together with two identities. A bit of work will have to be done around what is acceptable to the community—the colour, the logo and, of course, the new name. Then there is everything else that comes with a new council, such as picking itself a CEO to try to work out its new identity as it moves forward. There is a lot of work to be done in that process when we come together in October, and that is part of the process. They also may have no ward system under the current system with the advisory board, but once they are elected as a whole council, they can apply to the advisory board to put in a ward system that they all agree upon. Unfortunately, there has been a situation in which two councils working on their local implementation committee could not agree on a ward system, so the advisory board will more than likely come back with a zero-ward process until they can get re-elected again.

We have a long way to go on this process. I think the sector as a whole is champing at the bit; it is getting very nervous in that time is ticking and it wants to get on with this. The important part is that I am seeing clear leadership from the sector. It has made it very clear to me that it absolutely wants this process. When I meet with it for those roundtable lunches, we have a lot of discussion about that and how we can best deliver the service model. A lot of work is happening in the background. We launched an online toolkit in January this year, and that enables local governments to work out how much workforce will be needed for the population and how much work will need to be done to get to the resolution of town planning schemes, rating systems, ratios of debt and all those types of things in the back offices. They are all happening now while we are working through this process. A lot of work is happening in the background. All we are really waiting for is the final report to come out from the advisory board. I will finish where I started by saying that we really need to make sure that we actually build these local governments for the future. As I stated, there will be 3.5 million people in the metropolitan region in 2050. We have to have the vision today to make sure that those local governments are set up for the future. It is not about today or tomorrow, it is about the next 20 years in the Perth metropolitan area to make sure that our local government is sustainable and able to deal with that huge growth. Mr Acting Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore) [5.37 pm]: I would like to make a contribution to this debate on the motion that the house advises the government that it does not support the council amalgamations process in the metropolitan area. Local government, of course, is very important to the National Party, to the people in my electorate and to me, having served in local government for many, many years as a councillor and shire president. I have seen quite a few different types of government processes put in place to bring about reform. They were all claimed to be voluntary, but the local governments involved often felt a degree of compulsion that if they were not involved in the process, they may well have been left out and a bad result might have occurred for them. This current process, as the minister has laid out, does not involve any legislative change at this stage, although a bill is stalled in the other place at the moment that was thought to be necessary to bring about that metropolitan reform process in the first place. I will talk about that a bit later as we go through some of the matters to be discussed tonight.

Certainly, in the current process taking place in the metropolitan area, more than one council submission has been made on many of the different topics, if you like, or local government changes. I do not know how those councils came to their view as to whether they should make a submission—whether they really felt a compulsion that their local government was in immediate need of change or whether, as I said before, they felt that if they did not participate in the process, they would be in some way duded. Nonetheless, each council and each councillor has a responsibility not to acquiesce to the demands of the minister, but, instead, to represent

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faithfully the best interests of their electors, their ratepayers and their residents. On one level, it might be said that, at the end of the day, the councillors involved had to put forward submissions that they felt were in the best interests of their councils. However, it comes down to whether the amount of indirect pressure that they felt may have influenced the submissions that they made. If those submissions were made with the best intent and with the genuine best interests of their ratepayers at heart, that is fine, but we might not know that now because the pressure that was faced by local governments in this process may have led to some suboptimal process and some flawed submissions going forward. We will not really know that because I have not seen the submissions. The Local Government Advisory Board has seen the submissions. As the minister has said, he has had a look at a number of submissions and that process is underway.

When we first heard of the process that was to take place in the metropolitan area, the clear understanding in the Nationals was that we did not support forced local government amalgamations or, indeed, forced reform of any sort in the regions. Our support for the local government reform process in the metropolitan area as we first understood it was strictly conditional on the process not spilling out into the regions.

Dr A.D. Buti: So why is it okay in the city and not in the country? Why?

Mr R.S. LOVE: I represent a regional area and I am not sure what is in the best interests of the city, but I do know what is in the best interests of the regions, and losing local governments certainly is not.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Armadale, thank you.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The view that we took was clearly laid out by our then leader, the member for Pilbara, who is in the chamber tonight. I heard him say that in this very place when he laid out that the Nationals would not interfere with the metropolitan process, but we would not countenance that process spilling out into the regions, and that was our understanding. It is probably best thought of as the concept of a ring-fence around the metropolitan area.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: We will get there; listen. We do not support forced amalgamations in the regions and we will not allow our government partners to undertake that process in the regions.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Armadale!

Mr R.S. LOVE: Okay; we will get there.

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

Withdrawal of Remark

Ms M.M. QUIRK: The Minister for Water called the member for Warnbro a smart-arse. I do not believe that is parliamentary.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza): I did not hear the phrase, and I certainly would have called it if I had heard it. If that was in fact said, I think it needs to be withdrawn.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.S. LOVE: We are having a bit of fun tonight, which is good.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: We thought that we had a concept, as we described it, of a ring-fence around the metropolitan area and that forced local government reform would not spill out into the regions. That was pretty well understood, I thought, by us and other parties.

As I said earlier, part of the early reform process was put forward in the Local Government Amendment Bill 2013. Important provisions of that bill caused the Nationals a serious amount of concern, as they clearly impinged upon the integrity and independence of the Local Government Advisory Board. The Local Government Advisory Board has been integral in the process that we are now involved in. In the past, it has not supported hostile boundary takeovers and hostile amalgamation bids by other local governments, and that has occurred in my electorate when it has refused such types of bids even in recent times. The initial

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amendments to the composition of the advisory board would have seen that board go from five to seven members, with an additional two government appointees. That would have meant a minority of local government representation and a majority of state government appointees. We negotiated to gain the support of the minister to amend that bill because of our concern for the integrity of the Local Government Advisory Board and the importance that that placed on safeguarding local governments both in the regions and throughout the state. From that aspect, I think we acted in the best interests of the whole state.

Other elements of that legislation caused concern, one of which was, as I recall—it is going back a bit—the requirement that the Local Government Advisory Board pay due regard to government policy of the day. We had that provision removed so that that would not lead to the politicisation of the board or to a situation in which it made decisions not in what it thought was the best interests of local government, but in the best interests of the state government.

Those amendments to that bill, which has now stalled in the other place, would have the effect of preventing political pressure from being exerted. In that regard, we had a very good relationship with the Minister for Local Government, and I would like to thank him for his good-natured dealings with us in catering for our concerns, which ultimately he was able to assuage, and we thought that we would have in place a Local Government Advisory Board that would not see bad decisions being made throughout the state.

As I said earlier, when this process was first undertaken, we thought that there was an understanding between the two government parties—the Liberal Party and the National Party—on whether this process would spill out into the regions or whether it would be contained within the metropolitan area.

Mr C.J. Barnett: A lot of the regional areas I visit want amalgamation. They tell me that repeatedly in country areas. You need to listen more carefully to the constituency out there.

Dr A.D. Buti: They probably want it more.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Quite a few do.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I can assure the Premier that many local governments in my electorate do not want to be forcibly amalgamated.

Mr C.J. Barnett: They want to amalgamate, they want to be efficient and they want to serve their communities effectively.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, do you want to take interjections?

Mr R.S. LOVE: No, not in that particular instance, because I think we have dealt with that. I think we know best what our electorates want.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah, he is not taking any interjections.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The reports in the media and elsewhere of senior members of the government making pronouncements that country areas would be reformed following the metropolitan process have made members of the wider National Party very concerned and nervous about the future of local government in their region. That has been brought about by some of the uncertainty and concern about reports such as the report on the ABC about the minister declaring in Bunbury that regional amalgamations were inevitable and would not happen until the metropolitan changes were completed, but he warned regional councils to get ready and not stand in the way of reform. That type of language has been very concerning to my constituents, so much so that at the state convention of the National Party held recently in Margaret River—we have heard plenty of comment about that convention—the Nationals WA as a whole voted to accept a motion that the state convention of the Nationals WA withdraw support for the metropolitan local government reform process. That statement must be read in the context that the Nationals are concerned not so much with this current reform process in the metropolitan area, but with the effect it might have on the regions if that process were carried out in the regions. What would stop both the lay party and the parliamentary members of the Nationals WA from feeling such discomfort and from withdrawing support is pretty simple; that is, we need our partners to guarantee in this place that the current metropolitan process will not roll out into the regions and that our understanding that the reform process was ring-fenced to the metropolitan area in this term of government is indeed correct. I call on my colleagues in government to give us that assurance.

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Amendment to Motion

MR P.T. MILES (Wanneroo — Parliamentary Secretary) [5.50 pm]: I move —

To delete all words after “house” and insert —

- (1) notes the various inquiries and reports over the past 50 years, which recommend reforms to the structure of local government in Western Australia so as to ensure higher capacity and more sustainable local governments including —
 - (i) “Metropolitan Local Government Review”, undertaken by the independent Metropolitan Local Government Review Panel (Robson Report); and
 - (ii) “In Your Hands: Shaping the future of Local Government in Western Australia”, undertaken by the Systemic Sustainability Study Panel led by the WA Local Government Association (SSS Report);
- (2) notes that a range of proposals for reform in the metropolitan area are being considered by the Local Government Advisory Board;
- (3) supports the cooperative discussions which have been underway by local governments in the metropolitan area; and
- (4) supports the Minister for Local Government giving due consideration to the recommendations of the Local Government Advisory Board.

Back in 2007, I was elected to the City of Wanneroo council and I was very proud to be a member of that council. I had a great time and it was a great learning experience for me on how local governments work and obviously, to some extent, how agencies of government work as well. During that process, the council was a part of the Systemic Sustainability Study report and I remember the discussions we had in our forums behind closed doors about whether that SSS report would go far enough and deliver proper reform to local government. What disturbs me about that whole process is that many millions of dollars were put into that report by local councils across the length and breadth of this state, and the Western Australian Local Government Association, which was dealing with that report at the time, was very much a champion of that report to be the reform going forward for local government, but here we are seven years later and not one part of that report has been acted on.

It is good to see that this Liberal government has been able to step up and show some initiative in moving some moderate reform in local government to modernise the metropolitan councils, and rightly so because some of them are too small and some are too large. As the minister said earlier, some of the regional councils, which I am aware of, and some of the smaller metropolitan councils have struggled with the by-law processes to achieve some of the reforms that they need. I will illustrate a couple of examples. When I was the chairman and a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation for the first term of government, we brought into the house something like 40 reports with recommendations to knock back by-laws that local councils had tried to implement but were illegal because the councils did not have the expertise, the drafting mechanisms or the notification mechanisms to be able to create those by-laws and were caught out by some simple little slip-ups. Although we tried to help out where we could, at the end of the day the law is the law. I would like to see some of the larger metropolitan councils guide some of our regional councils and help them with their planning and their by-laws so that they do not get caught up in the very expensive process of having their by-laws knocked back. Every by-law that the delegated legislation committee knocks back costs a local government about \$5 000. I know that the then Minister for Local Government, Hon John Castrilli, the member for Bunbury, was very frustrated by the amount of correspondence we had to send to him on the advice of the house to disallow these by-laws.

Another thing that I would like to happen involves the outer metropolitan councils, which the minister touched on earlier. There is a disconnect between the City of Wanneroo, the City of Stirling and the inner-city councils because councils such as the City of Wanneroo struggle to deliver the sporting ovals and the clubrooms needed by specific communities. Although those councils receive many hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars extra a year from their growth, the money seems to disappear into a black hole and the councils are never able to achieve anything substantial.

I will finish on another point because I know that others want to speak on the motion. I talked to the member for Moore a couple of months ago about how the president of the Shire of Gingin was keen to have a bit more of a

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residential base to help his other constituents and to generate some revenue, so he approached the City of Wanneroo and asked for the suburbs of Two Rocks and Yanchep to be included in the Shire of Gingin. Although the Shire of Gingin is in the regions and Yanchep and Two Rocks are in the metropolitan area, I said to him that if they came to an agreement, I was sure that everybody would be happy. However, the City of Wanneroo's attitude was that it did not want to give up any of its space or capacity, which I found very odd because the City of Wanneroo at that time was complaining that it could not keep up with the growth in that area and was struggling to maintain services.

At the end of the day, the board, the minister and the government are doing the right thing by showing some leadership to local councils on how to move forward and start taking some decisions that need to be taken for their communities as a whole instead of thinking about possibly their own empires and the building that they are doing. The member for Moore, who I talk with quite often, has some genuine concerns for the regional councils. I have been out there with him and other members when we have opened up mobile phone towers and the like and there is definitely a need for some sort of local representation, but whether we need to have chief executive officers and all the rest of it is another story.

MS E. EVANGEL (Perth) [5.57 pm]: I have heard time and again in this place the use of the phrase “forced amalgamations”. Nothing could be further from the truth. One member opposite, I cannot remember which one—perhaps it was the member for Mandurah—mentioned that the conversation surrounding local government amalgamations presents itself in this house for a sixth occasion, but all I hear from members opposite is the same old thing. I have not heard one new piece of information from members opposite during the six occasions that we have had this conversation in this house. It would be really refreshing to hear something new from members opposite. It is like listening to a broken record—the same old thing, time and again.

I will revert to the so-called forced amalgamations, which could not be further from the truth. This topic of conversation has been ongoing for many years. I remember fondly my years serving as a councillor for the City of Perth. I was first elected in 2005 and about six months into my role as a councillor, discussions of amalgamations were brought to the table. We sat together as a council and discussed the possibility of amalgamations. In fact, I remember talking about boundaries, so even back then, perhaps as early as 2006 or late 2005, I made my point very clear that if it were to happen, it would be wonderful to see all of the City of Vincent absorbed by or taken into the City of Perth. This process has been discussed for a very long time by members on both sides of the house, and it is an important discussion. Local government reform has to happen because 30 councils for a city the size of ours is far too many. What was suitable 20 years ago in 1995 when the review was conducted does not apply in 2014. We have to look forward. We have to build sustainable councils into the future. My electorate is really fascinating. It is a diverse and activated one. It is the capital city electorate and therefore it is unique in many ways. We see a capital city that is really quite tiny in size—in fact, it is the smallest capital city electorate in the country.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: The Liberal Party created it.

Ms E. EVANGEL: It was the right thing to do back then. I thank the member for that interjection. She was part of the council, so what is she carrying on about now? I will not take any more interjections, Mr Acting Speaker. I respected the right of members opposite to speak.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza): Member for Midland—okay. Thank you, members.

Ms E. EVANGEL: The member for Midland was there; she should have done something!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Perth, if you are going to respond to the interjections, I cannot protect you.

Ms E. EVANGEL: My apologies, Mr Acting Speaker; you are right.

On that topic, I remember the wise words of the former Lord Mayor of Perth, Dr Peter Natrass, who was part of the process in 1995.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Albany, thank you.

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Ms E. EVANGEL: On a number of occasions, Dr Natrass said that the best thing that ever happened to the City of Perth in 1995 was that it was split and a smaller City of Perth was created. That allowed the council of the time—remember we are talking 20 years back and not today or tomorrow—to concentrate on building a capital city of significance. At that time, the capital city was completely neglected. We saw a donut approach to a capital city with little satellites springing up everywhere. That was fantastic, but the fact is that our capital city was neglected for many, many years. The fact that the area of the City of Perth was reduced to 10.1 hectares was the perfect solution at the time because it allowed that concentration and focus on building a capital city. I think the City of Perth has done really well. The job has been extremely well achieved. We have a city that is highly recognisable internationally and nationally; it is a thriving, pulsating city full of activity. There is just so much going on.

I will get back to the debate today. The opposition needs to understand that what applies today or applied yesterday will not apply tomorrow. What was good in years gone by is not building for a sustainable future.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! Member for Mandurah, can you just let the member for Perth talk.

Ms E. EVANGEL: We need to look into the future and at sustainability. That is exactly what local government reform is doing. Why do we need reform? There are many reasons, and our Minister for Local Government was very eloquent in his description of those reasons. The first is better service delivery. The minister referred to connectivity. As our city grows—we hear it will grow by 500 000 people in the next 13 years—we have to plan for the future. We need to think about connecting our capital city with the adjacent City of Vincent. We need to think about transport, bicycle networks and roads. All of these issues need to be dealt with together. Building a bigger stronger capital city with the inclusion of the City of Vincent is certainly a responsible manner in which to move forward.

I have mentioned my role as a City of Perth councillor. I was extremely proud to serve in that role for eight years. Local government is an essential part of our community and the democratic process. What I found from my personal experience is that local government is usually the first point of call. If somebody has a problem or issue, I have found they will usually go to their local government councillor or the local mayor. I am proud to say, even as the state member for Perth, that people come to me as their first point of call, because I make it my focus to be community focused. I really enjoy that one-on-one communication with my electorate. I like to get out there and talk to them to find out exactly how they feel. That is probably a quality I picked up from being a City of Perth councillor. It is a wonderful way to stay in touch with what is going on. I recommend it to members opposite. They might learn something.

A government member interjected.

Ms E. EVANGEL: Thank you, colleague.

Dr A.D. Buti: Come out to Armadale and I will show you how a local member speaks to constituents.

The SPEAKER: Thank you for that pearl of wisdom.

Ms E. EVANGEL: We have heard on a number of occasions that we are a government that does not consult. I have to laugh. I do not know whether members opposite have been hiding for the past 12 months; they seem to be fixated in time or maybe they have been playing hide-and-seek with each other, but they certainly have not been out and about. I find it fascinating that members opposite show such tremendous interest in my electorate and in issues occurring in the City of Vincent. I have heard the member for Mandurah on a number of occasions refer to the splitting of the City of Vincent as though he is really concerned. I have never seen the member for Mandurah in my electorate! I have been down to his electorate on a number of occasions, but I have never seen him in mine; he was probably hiding.

Several members interjected.

Ms E. EVANGEL: Hide-and-seek!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah, I have seen you in Fitzgerald Street.

Ms E. EVANGEL: Mr Speaker, take a photo for me and then I can believe it.

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I can proudly stand here and say that this government has excelled in the consultation process that it has undertaken over the past 12 months. I stand here proudly. Our minister has become a local personality in my electorate. Honestly, I am getting worried because I think they like the minister almost as much as they like me. The reason is that he has taken the time to come and speak to my constituents. He is constantly engaging in conversation with the mayors and councillors. They all feel really comfortable with everything he is doing. They feel like they can talk to him; they can pick up the phone and call him if they have something they need to talk about. I think it is absolutely fantastic that we have a local government minister who has made the effort to engage one-on-one with my community. As such, the minister has listened to my community and, again, I feel really proud. What has happened over the last few months is quite interesting. We all know local government reform has to happen. If we are to move to the future in a sustainable, economically viable way, local government reform must occur. Even the former mayor of Vincent has advocated for local government reform. I respect her for that quite highly—I really do. Back in July the government put out its first proposal. I have admitted before in this house, and again today, that it was not a favourable proposal or one that best suited all members of my electorate. What happened then? We saw a brilliant display of community support in putting forth what they believed was the best solution for our electorate. We saw a brilliantly run campaign called “Vincent to Perth: One in, all in” by the City of Vincent, and I applaud it for that. We had two major rallies in the electorate. We saw thousands of people come together. I presented a petition containing 7 000 signatures in this house. Nearly half of my electorate signed the “One in, all in” petition. I must admit I was put in a compromising position. I understand that we need to move forward with local government reform, but at the same time we need to listen to the community. That is what consultation is all about and that is why it is fantastic that we have this minister who does consult.

The Minister for Local Government came out to the City of Vincent and spent some time there. He saw that it was a thriving inner-city area and understood the underlying reasons that people wanted to live and work in the Vincent community—they want to feel that they are a part of the city. That was a wonderful thing for our minister to do, and I really appreciate it and thank the minister.

We also had a visit from our Premier, who also has taken the time to listen to communities and to consult. He understands that the consultation process is extremely important, and he took the time to do so. Our Premier is a busy man and has a lot going on, but he did not ignore the Vincent community. He came out and spent time with us, for which I thank the Premier; it was a wonderful gesture by him, which the whole community appreciated. There followed a consultation period, so we all got an opportunity. I put in my submissions to the Local Government Advisory Board, and whoever else was keen to make themselves heard also made their submissions to the board. That went on over a four-month period, which was fantastic. I know this because a lot of people came and spoke to me about it and sought my advice, and I told them, “Now is your opportunity; this Liberal–National government is giving you the opportunity to have your say, so take the opportunity and have your say. It’s now or never.” That is exactly what they did. A lot of people rang me or came to see me in my electorate office; we met for coffee and discussed it, and what did they do? They put in their submissions. Everyone I consulted felt really happy because they at least had the opportunity to make their opinions heard about the future of the local government boundaries in our community.

We then moved on to the next phase of the consultation process, which is the Local Government Advisory Board—an independent body of extremely intelligent, well-balanced community people who independently review these submissions. What better democratic process is there? How could anyone argue with the consultation process that we have presented? The minister has already received detailed reviews; he has received one report and is waiting for others, and we are all anxiously waiting to hear the decision of this Local Government Advisory Board. It is absolutely abysmal for the opposition to suggest that anything other than a democratic, consultative process has taken place on this very important issue of local government reform, which will affect current and future generations.

I want to refer to one of the comments made by the member for Mandurah, who said that local government reform had “divided and demoralised” the community. That is not what I have been hearing, member for Mandurah. All I have heard is, “This is great; let’s get on with it; let’s make it happen.” That is what I have been hearing; the member should speak on behalf of the people of his own electorate; perhaps he has been speaking to the two out of 10 people who voted Labor in the last election. However, the community members I have spoken to have said, “Get on with it; make it happen.”

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

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[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 10 September 2014]

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Mr David Templeman; Ms Eleni Evangel; Acting Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Tony Simpson; Mr Shane Love; Ms Margaret Quirk; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Paul Miles; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr Bill Johnston; Speaker; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Frank Alban; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr P

The SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah, we have been through this before.

Ms E. EVANGEL: I will conclude there, but before I conclude, I would like to once again congratulate the Minister for Local Government and the Premier for being inclusive, open and transparent, and for taking action to make local government reform happen, because I can tell members that it is really needed.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah! I understand that we are speaking to the amendment. Does the member for Mandurah want to speak to the amendment?

Mr D.A. Templeman: Yes.

The SPEAKER: Right. I call the member for Belmont, then I will call the member for Mandurah.

MRS G.J. GODFREY (Belmont) [6.14 pm]: I am very pleased to be able to stand and talk about my passion, which is local government, and the amendment to the motion that has been put before us this afternoon. I commend local government, in which I worked for 16 years in total, and furthered my passion while working as mayor for six years. Local government is underestimated by a lot of —

Point of Order

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am just wondering which section of the amendment the member for Belmont is addressing.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington, just let the member for Belmont proceed. This is a very broad amendment, so I will let her proceed.

Debate Resumed

Mrs G.J. GODFREY: Before I come to my conclusions at the end of my speech, I would like to cover my work and history in local government and my time as an elected member and mayor, as I move into my understanding of the reform process, because the opposition seems to have a different view about the history of how this has come about.

I started working in local government at the Town of Port Hedland in 1989 and worked in various local governments through to 2005, at which time I finished at the City of Perth because I became Mayor of the City of Belmont. As an elected member, I ran for election three times and was elected to the City of Belmont in 1997. I continued in that position until I won the seat of Belmont in the last state election; that was 16 years as an elected local government member. I held the position of mayor for six years. The Belmont local government was formed in 1899 and is 115 years old; the boundaries have stayed the same for all that time. As Mayor of the City of Belmont, I represented Belmont on the natural resource management committee, the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council, and the Western Australian Local Government Association. For some of the time on the WALGA board, I was with the member for Moore when the systemic sustainability study panel report was prepared. It found that local government was, in many instances, unsustainable, particularly in some country areas. However, the decision was made that it would be too big a job to do both, so the metropolitan local government reform would come first. That is my understanding of why metropolitan local governments were dealt with before looking at the country.

Local governments requested a voluntary process; there was a huge outcry for no forced amalgamations, as had happened in Victoria. WALGA knew that we needed reform, but the local governments were strongly of the view that there were to be no forced amalgamations and called to be allowed to do it themselves. What was the outcome of that? Nothing; there were no outcomes in the metropolitan area. As mayor, I represented Belmont in talks with the Town of Victoria Park and the City of South Perth. Those talks took place because it was put to us by the state government to talk to our local government neighbours to work out where we thought reforms should take place. We all wanted to stay as we were, but if there was to be a second option, Victoria Park wanted to move to South Perth; it did not want to go with Belmont. Its worst option was to be split down the middle and go half to South Perth and half to Belmont. These were all in the discussions. We also spoke to the Shire of Kalamunda, but at the end of the day, everyone decided, “Let’s just stay as we are”, so there was no outcome for any voluntary amalgamations in the metropolitan area.

It then moved to local governments and WALGA saying, “Let the state government show leadership; let it show direction on what it should be asking for”, because none of the local governments was prepared to join together and come up with recommendations for who they wanted to amalgamate with. They came up with, “You draw

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lines on the map; you show us.” Hence, we had the Robson report, which went out for public comment with proposed local government boundaries; it included activity centres and proposed populations. There we had it; we had what the state government was putting out and what it was asking local governments to join together to provide, and I did not agree with where Belmont was put. It was proposed to be merged with Bayswater, across the river, which is a natural boundary. Since then, others have disagreed and the document went out for further public consultation. This proposal has been consulted to death; there has been so much consultation that in the end people were saying, “Just get on and do it; just do it.” The recommendations have gone to the board; Belmont and Kalamunda have put in several. I am looking forward to the outcome, but just going over the process, I do not understand how the opposition can say, “No forced amalgamations.”

When we look back at what has happened, we see that there has been unsustainable local government. It has been acknowledged that reform is needed, even by Hon Ljiljana Ravlich, the opposition spokesperson on local government. The Labor Party did a report which said that reform of local government was needed. There definitely needs to be some action on this issue. I am very pleased with how the minister has dealt with it. I look forward to the outcome of the independent advisory board.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [6.20 pm]: I will not speak for very long.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You’ve already spoken.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: If the Premier was in this chamber all the time, he would know that we are discussing an amendment to the motion.

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: If the Premier does not understand what goes on in this place, that is his problem.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah, I want to hear you now.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The fact is that the opposition moved a motion in this place, which states —

That this house advises the government that it does not support its forced council amalgamations process in the metropolitan area.

That is the motion that we would like to vote on. That is the motion that we believe should be put to this house. If the member for Perth and others strongly support the process, they should oppose that motion. It is as simple as that. What are they scared of? They hide behind a convoluted amendment moved by the Leader of the House that deletes all words after “house” and inserts a range of flowery comments, including noting reports on reform of local government, noting that a range of proposals are before the Local Government Advisory Board, supporting the cooperative discussions and supporting the Minister for Local Government. What are members opposite scared of? They will not vote on a simple motion that was endorsed, as the member for Moore said in his contribution. I think the media and others should take note of the question that the member for Moore put to his alliance colleagues in the Liberal Party about assurances. At the end of his contribution, he called upon the Liberal Party to give an assurance. At this stage none of them has got up and said anything about that.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You never approached me.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: We asked the Premier. He interjected. He had a go at the member and said that everywhere he goes in the country and regional areas, they are begging for amalgamations. That is what he said. The Premier contradicted the member for Moore.

The point I want to make is quite simple. I understand that a number of people are listening to this debate tonight. I want to make very clear what has occurred.

Mr C.J. Barnett: There are none in here. There’s no-one up there.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: There are a number of members watching. In fact, a couple of them have texted me already and said some interesting things about the minister’s contribution. They are constituents of his. I will not read out the texts because they are not very complimentary.

The fact is that by moving this amendment to the motion before the house tonight, the Liberal Party is now seeking to not even put its policy to the vote of the Parliament. It is not prepared to put to the vote the motion that this house advises the government that it does not support its forced council amalgamation process in the metropolitan area. The Liberal Party is worried about that, which is why it put up this pathetic amendment. If the member for Perth is so convinced that the Premier is such a wonderful man for prancing down the streets of

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Vincent and that the Minister for Local Government is second in popularity to the member for Perth in her own electorate, then test it. She should have the guts to test it but she will not. The reason is that she will follow, along with all her other Liberal mates —

Ms E. Evangel interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Perth, I do not want to hear from you again. I am going to call you to order for the first time. Member for Mandurah, the fact that you are referred to by a member on the other side does not give you licence to start shouting and trying to drown them out.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The member for Perth will go down the yellow brick road and follow this pathetic thing. If she is so convinced that this process is not flawed, that this process is not based upon a lie and that this process is not based upon a broken promise that was made in the lead-up to the 2013 election, why does she not have the guts to vote for the motion that is before the house that I moved at approximately 4.20 pm? The member does not have the guts to do it. I suspect that members of the National Party understand —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: No, I will not have a go at them. They also believe we should vote on the motion before the house. That is what they should do. Now we have an amended motion before us, which is a gutless attempt to silence the Parliament from having its say on whether or not a process that is about to reach its conclusion tomorrow or in the coming days or weeks is flawed and is a forced amalgamation process. If members do not believe it is, why are they scared of taking this motion to a vote?

I say to the people who might be listening to this debate—the communities in Canning and a number of community organisations and action groups—that they should be very aware that tonight the Liberal Party intends to put up its amendment. If that amendment is successful, my motion falls over. The member for Belmont will support it. She gets up here and has a go at the privatisation of the TAB but she cannot force herself to come over and vote when she knows it is wrong. What is she scared of? If she thinks this process is so perfect, that this process has been so well thought out, has been totally transparent and every person in every community in this place has been told the truth and were not lied to before the 2013 election, and if she thinks that is the truth, she should vote against the pathetic amendment that has been put up and let us have a chance to put forward our motion because it is the one that we wanted to debate today. This is the motion that was moved in this house tonight and was put up for debate. This is the one that makes it quite clear and simple that this house advises the government that it does not support its forced council amalgamation process in the metropolitan area. The Liberal Party should put it up and vote it down. It is not even prepared to put it up. Instead, it puts up this gutless piece of rubbish and then the member for Belmont stands up and supports the amendment. I do not think she even understands what the amendment is about. She does not understand the process. The people in Belmont who do have concerns about what the government is foisting upon them will not even have the chance of having this Parliament vote on a motion that was moved this afternoon.

Those people who might be listening and who may be concerned about the process will not have a chance to have their concern heard through this motion put to this Parliament because the government, through the Premier and the minister, will prevent that from happening. When we come to a vote tonight, everyone is very clear that we will be voting on the amended motion, which basically deletes everything that we moved this afternoon. In fact, it keeps only three words. It deletes the rest and then puts in this piffle about noting all these things, such as reports. There is no mention of people having a chance through this Parliament to support the process. The fact is that the process is flawed but the government is not prepared to test it in this Parliament. It is too gutless to do it.

I am going to sit very soon, but members might want to keep this motion going until 7.00 pm—talk it out. But we will bring on another motion, and we will just simply put up the argument to this Parliament, and we will continue to argue why the government's process is flawed and why it has disregarded the concerns of people and disenfranchised people through not allowing many of them to have the ultimate say on the triggering date or amendments and other aspects. We will keep putting the argument up, and at the end of the day the government will be tested. Unfortunately, for many communities it will be too late because they will have been decimated by what the government has proposed. However, I think people have long memories, unlike the Premier, who has said on various occasions that people do not really take that much notice of election promises; “No, it's the hullabaloo” or whatever it is —

Mr C.J. Barnett: I never said that.

Mr David Templeman; Ms Eleni Evangel; Acting Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Tony Simpson; Mr Shane Love; Ms Margaret Quirk; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Paul Miles; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr Bill Johnston; Speaker; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Frank Alban; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr P

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, the Premier did—absolutely he did! The Premier said people do not take notice of election promises. I tell the Premier what: a few will come and spook the Premier for the rest of the time he is here, if he stays until the 2017 election, which is obviously highly conjectured now.

Let us defeat this, National Party! Friends, let us defeat this! Come on, this is the National Party's chance! Let us defeat this and then let us put the motion I moved at about 4.20 pm today. Let us vote for that motion, and let us not follow the gutless line of the National Party's Liberal friends, member for Moore—who spoke very well, I might say, unless he does not follow me, and I might say something different. I would be very interested if he actually does get an answer from the Premier after he challenged the Premier to put up or shut up about what might happen in regional Western Australia. The fact of the matter is that the member for Moore and I know that when the Minister for Local Government said, as he said at the Western Australian Local Government Association convention and the WALGA annual general meeting a couple of weeks ago, that amalgamations for regional WA are not being considered by him “at this stage”, that is code for, “Mates, we're coming after you! We're going to fix up the metropolitan area first, and then we're going to come after you in the country.” The member for Moore knows that, I know that, and if those dumbos on the other side do not pick that up now, they have rocks in their head.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier) [6.32 pm]: This has been a very entertaining debate on all sides. But who spoke about the substance of the issue? Certainly no-one opposite did. No-one opposite spoke about the substance and structure of local government and its future and relevance in this century. No-one did. The opposition did not have a single positive thing to say.

I go right back to the very beginning of this issue. There are 140 local authorities in Western Australia. There are 30 in the metropolitan area. In country areas a number of local authorities have fewer than 500 people. In the metropolitan area a number of local authorities administer fewer than five square kilometres. Several of those are in my electorate. From memory, the electorate of Cottesloe has, I think, one-third representation of a federal member of Parliament, one state member of Parliament, and 45 local councillors.

Mr D.J. Kelly: Why didn't you have the guts to talk like this before the election?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I did—repeatedly!

Mr S.K. L'Estrange interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Churchlands, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr P.T. Miles interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo, I call you for the second time.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That is at the heart of the issue. The graph that the Minister for Local Government showed that related only to metropolitan Perth showed clearly to the hundreds of thousands of ratepayers out there that the smaller the local authority, the higher the rates. My rates in Claremont—Claremont is a wealthy suburb—are \$2 600. What would they be in Stirling?

Dr K.D. Hames: \$1 200.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Okay, let us say \$2 600 in Claremont and \$1 200 in Stirling. Do I get over twice the service of the people of Stirling? I do not think so! My constituents are probably paying hundreds of dollars more than they should. They are starting to realise that, too.

There is no doubt that there are economies of scale. We are not talking about a single local government for Perth; we are talking about halving the number to 15, 16 or 17—whatever it ends up at. It will be sensible reform. As a political party, the Labor Party had nothing to say on policy because it does not have a policy. It dodged it when it was in government. This government, or at least the Liberal Party, has been willing to respond to a report from WALGA itself—the local authorities—which came to this government and said something needed to change. We have had the courage to say that we as a Liberal Party will lead by example in metropolitan Perth, where 75 per cent of the people live. That is what we are doing. At the same time, as a Liberal Party, we are committing to major investment in the City of Perth, Scarborough, Cockburn and other areas. We are rebuilding not only the capital city, but also metropolitan Perth, and part of that is a rational, logical structure for local government. That is what it is about. The Labor Party is not up for it; it is simply not up for reform.

Mr David Templeman; Ms Eleni Evangel; Acting Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Tony Simpson; Mr Shane Love; Ms Margaret Quirk; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Paul Miles; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr Bill Johnston; Speaker; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Frank Alban; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr P

Mr D.J. Kelly: Take the money out of schools!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is not about schools; it is about local government. That is what we are doing.

We are not dealing with country areas; we are dealing with the local authorities in the metropolitan area. Pick an area of the state: I am not picking on my friend the member for Kalgoorlie, but look at the area to the north of Kalgoorlie. What is there? Menzies, Leonora and all those areas. Are they viable? No. Do they provide extensive services? No. They are totally dependent on the commonwealth and state governments. What would it mean, member for Kalgoorlie? Imagine if there was an outback council, heavily funded by the state government and heavily funded by the commonwealth government to create the outback shire of Western Australia—it would be fantastic!

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Member for Bunbury, would it not be fantastic to have Bunbury as a truly second capital city, with a wide metropolitan area and a government department located there—a booming metropolitan area? Does the member for Bunbury agree?

Mr G.M. Castrilli: Absolutely.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Absolutely! There is a member who is willing to speak out. Here is a Minister for Local Government who is willing to speak out. But members opposite have nothing at all to contribute on local government!

MR F.A. ALBAN (Swan Hills) [6.37 pm]: Mr Speaker —

Several members interjected.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: Thanks for the accolades!

Mr D.J. Kelly: Did you come by train today?

Mr F.A. ALBAN: Has the member for Bassendean been asked to be a witness on the royal commission into unions? It is the same question as the member asked me.

The SPEAKER: Member for Swan Hills!

Mr F.A. ALBAN: I will respond to the amendment and also reflect on the initial motion, because the member for Mandurah mentioned it in the second debate and it has occupied this place for several hours. I believe that this is a desperate attempt by an increasingly desperate opposition that is lost in the political wilderness and trying to find a way home. It is desperate for relevance, and hoping that no-one will remember that the former Labor government was responsible —

Point of Order

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Mr Speaker, as you know, the standing orders do not allow members to read their speeches. I wonder if you could direct the member not to read his speech.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Swan Hills, please just refer to your notes. Thank you very much.

Debate Resumed

Mr F.A. ALBAN: Thank you, Mr Speaker. They are very fresh notes as well; this is today's daily program. I can read the program for members if they like.

I will go back to the part I was trying to finish. I was saying that the former Labor government was responsible for the commissioning of the 2006 local government reform review, which started this process, and there have been other reports. What did that report briefly recommend? It recommended that reform had to occur. Something that bothers me a little is that there was another report—there are several; the minister mentioned another one—that came from the systemic sustainability study undertaken by WALGA. It took four years to produce, and cost half a million dollars, paid for by local government. We would think that if local government had done a report on its own business and the outcome of that report said exactly the same as all the other reports have said before—namely, that reform is necessary—they would not wait until the government had to tell them what to do. As usual, I speak only about my electorate; I do not bother about everyone else's electorate. Other members are entitled to speak on their electorates. The City of Swan and the Shire of Mundaring are in my

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electorate. Were they given a choice? Yes, they were. Are they being forced into amalgamation? No, they are not. To give members a brief overview of the two electorates and why amalgamation should occur—I call it a marriage because amalgamation seems a bit harsh —

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean!

Mr F.A. ALBAN: Does the member for Bassendean know about the City of Swan?

Mr D.J. Kelly: Yes, I do.

The SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: Maybe he can incorporate it in his speech.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean! Member for Swan Hills, through the Chair.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: In my electorate, there is the City of Swan and the Shire of Mundaring. They have very similar interests but they are very different. The City of Swan has 120 000 residents and the Shire of Mundaring has 40 000—one-third of that number, but its area is quite large.

I am starting this because in my electorate we are positive about this process. I am not experiencing any negatives, nor is anyone marching in the streets. People constantly say to me that this will be good for both areas' councillors. Yes, there is always a price to pay because some councillors may not get a guernsey on their council; the number of councillors will be reduced. But it will be an opportunity for all ratepayers to select their very best candidates and to get rid of some of the deadwood that has probably been there for 20 or 30 years. With the very best being chosen, they will run the municipality like a business.

Ms L.L. Baker interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Maylands!

Mr F.A. ALBAN: The Shire of Mundaring covers a large area with very few residents—40 000, compared with the number in the City of Swan. It contains many roads that cost the shire to maintain. It has a huge proportion of bushland, and, of course, that gives the shire very little opportunity for close development without impacting on the environment, and that limits the shire's revenue and its opportunity to help the community with its urgent projects. For example, it was not able to help Mt Helena Football Club without the assistance of a state grant of \$150 000; it has not been able to do a lot towards maintaining the tennis courts; and it has started progress on the Mundaring recreation centre, thanks to a grant of \$3 million from the Liberal–National government. The recreation centre hosts three different codes every week—basketball, netball and hockey—for some 2 000 adults and children. I attended a meeting as recently as this Monday. It was an open forum on the future of the hills football group. It raised the issue of the lack of resources, mostly within the Shire of Mundaring. Quite ironically, this meeting was held in a facility owned by the City of Swan worth some \$2.5 million to \$3 million. The Shire of Mundaring cannot afford such a facility. Obviously, sporting clubs within the Shire of Mundaring that are competing would also like a hand. What issues did they raise? They raised the necessity for lights at Mundaring oval, Gidgegannup oval and Chidlow oval so that they can extend their hours of play into the evenings. Other clubs have needs and considerations.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Albany!

Mr F.A. ALBAN: Help is needed immediately so that these clubs can survive and can keep their sporting children in the hills rather than them straying into the city where we know danger lurks.

A limited income means limited resources. In my opinion, the Shire of Mundaring has made some irrational decisions, such as the decision to demolish the Chidlow community hall, which is heritage listed; the Mahogany Creek hall, which was built by the community; and possibly the Glen Forrest community hall. Luckily, all three halls that were up for potential demolition have been saved. What is best? It would be best if the Shire of Mundaring joined the City of Swan. People in the Shire of Mundaring have very few reservations. Why? The City of Swan is recognised by its peers as being among the best local governments within the metropolitan area.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

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The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro!

Mr F.A. ALBAN: The City of Swan has managed extraordinary expansion and development. It has the runs on the board; it has a future that is to be envied due to the construction of the Perth–Darwin highway, thanks to this government. What would have happened to my ratepayers of the City of Swan and the Shire of Mundaring if the Labor government had built the metropolitan rail, which would have taken people from my electorate on joy rides in circles around the northern suburbs? Would that have given them more jobs? Would it have provided expansion and would it have given the shire revenue to enable it to extend services to my people in the electorate of Swan Hills?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr F.A. ALBAN: The other thing that can happen with this amalgamation —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! Member for Cannington and Deputy Premier, I want to hear the member for Swan Hills.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Another positive, because there are many positives, is that the amalgamation or the marriage of the two shires will mean that the use of the council offices in the City of Swan will free the fairly elaborate building that is the Shire of Mundaring council chambers. What could that be used for? It could be used for tourism.

A member: Storage.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: Okay, storage. It could be used as a venue to promote tourism. It could also add to much-needed facilities for services and not-for-profit organisations. A typical example of why this process is well and truly needed as quickly as possible is that recently the Shire of Mundaring committed to borrowing \$9 million for the Boya library, which is a hop, step and jump from the Midland library, which is hardly utilised and contains old technology.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: In conclusion —

Several members interjected.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: Beautiful! Thank you very much.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr F.A. ALBAN: This reform is an opportunity for ratepayers to have a professional, efficient, productive and progressive local government. It is a process that has been undertaken with success among other businesses and farming communities. A catchcry in the seventies among farmers was get bigger or get out. The marriage of the two councils will provide considerable benefit to ratepayers of both municipalities. I believe that after some initial adjustments, and after we wade past the “world will end” view of Labor opposition members, local government can face the future positively and be perhaps prepared for rates and costs to be contained for the ratepayers of my electorate.

DR G.G. JACOBS (Eyre) [6.48 pm]: I would like to address the amended motion about inquiries and reports, the proposals being considered by the Local Government Advisory Board, cooperative discussion by local governments and the Minister for Local Government giving due consideration to the Local Government Advisory Board. Representing the Yilgarn of Western Australia, I was fortunate enough to have the Shire of Westonia included in my electorate and a merger between those two shires took place in 2011 and 2012. I refer to a report titled “Westonia–Yilgarn Regional Business Plan”, one of many reports. An amount of \$50 000 was committed to this plan and many reasons were given for why this amalgamation should take place. I will give the house some insight into what we are dealing with in the Shires of Yilgarn and Westonia. The Shire of Yilgarn has 1 769 people and the Shire of Westonia has 213 people. This plan refers to many reasons that an amalgamation model could be sustainable and explains why the current model is not sustainable. It is really interesting to hear the member for Mandurah comment on local government reform. When he does

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not agree with the process, he calls it shambolic and claims that the government has not undertaken any consultation. This voluntarily undertaken consultation process gave every reason for why the shires should be amalgamated. Did it happen? No, it did not happen.

Mr P. Papalia: Because you shifted the goalposts.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: We did not shift any goalposts. Clause 8 of the Local Government Act 1995 stands. Clause 8(3) states —

If, within one month after the notice is given, —

The shire put to the government that it wanted to undertake this process and amalgamate —

the Minister receives a request made in accordance with regulations and signed by at least 250, or at least 10%, of the electors of one of the districts —

As the total population of Westonia is 213, 10 per cent of the population is 21.3. Therefore, 22 people must have said they wanted a poll, so they had a poll.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: When the member for Bassendean does not like the facts, he shoots the messenger.

Mr P. Papalia: The facts are that you lied to them.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: We did not lie; the process was comprehensive.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member opposite referred to the member of Eyre and said, “The facts are you lied.”

Mr P. PAPALIA: I withdraw it.

Debate Resumed

Dr G.G. JACOBS: The next part of this process, which is not a forced process, is a process of consultation. This act has not been changed. We have not moved the goalposts, member for Warnbro. It is the same act; the provision is still there. Fifty per cent of the electors of one jurisdiction must turn out. What is 50 per cent of 213, member for Bassendean? It is 106.5, so 107. Of those 107 the majority have to say yes or no. Half of 107 is 53.5, but we cannot have half a person, so we will call it 54. Fifty-four people stopped an amalgamation process that everybody said should happen, including this study submitted by the two shires. Members opposite refer to a democratic process. Is that democratic? What will trigger any change when it is thought to be sustainable and a good move? We have to reflect on that process. We are about undertaking that process with the goal that it is for the good of the community and, as the minister has said, sustainable into the future. I want the Shire of Yilgarn to be sustainable. Heaven forbid; we know the poor season the shire has been through and the financial hardships the landowners and grain growers have been through. We have to do the right thing to make these communities sustainable.

Amendment (deletion of words) put and a division taken with the following result —

Division

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Ayes (25)

Mr P. Abetz
Mr F.A. Alban
Mr C.J. Barnett
Mr I.C. Blayney
Mr I.M. Britza
Mr G.M. Castrilli
Mr M.J. Cowper

Ms E. Evangel
Mrs G.J. Godfrey
Dr K.D. Hames
Mr C.D. Hatton
Mr A.P. Jacob
Dr G.G. Jacobs
Mr S.K. L'Estrange

Mr W.R. Marmion
Mr J.E. McGrath
Mr P.T. Miles
Ms A.R. Mitchell
Mr N.W. Morton
Dr M.D. Nahan
Mr D.C. Nalder

Mr J. Norberger
Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr M.H. Taylor
Mr A. Krsticevic (*Teller*)

Noes (22)

Ms L.L. Baker
Dr A.D. Buti
Mr V.A. Catania
Mr R.H. Cook
Ms M.J. Davies
Ms W.M. Duncan

Ms J. Farrer
Mr B.J. Grylls
Mr W.J. Johnston
Mr D.J. Kelly
Mr F.M. Logan
Mr R.S. Love

Mr M. McGowan
Mr M.P. Murray
Mr P. Papalia
Ms M.M. Quirk
Mr D.T. Redman
Mrs M.H. Roberts

Ms R. Saffioti
Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr P.B. Watson
Mr D.A. Templeman (*Teller*)

Pairs

Mrs L.M. Harvey
Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr J.M. Francis
Mr J.H.D. Day

Ms S.F. McGurk
Ms J.M. Freeman
Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr J.R. Quigley

Amendment thus passed.

Division

Amendment (insertion of words) put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (25)

Mr P. Abetz
Mr F.A. Alban
Mr C.J. Barnett
Mr I.C. Blayney
Mr I.M. Britza
Mr G.M. Castrilli
Mr M.J. Cowper

Ms E. Evangel
Mrs G.J. Godfrey
Dr K.D. Hames
Mr C.D. Hatton
Mr A.P. Jacob
Dr G.G. Jacobs
Mr S.K. L'Estrange

Mr W.R. Marmion
Mr J.E. McGrath
Mr P.T. Miles
Ms A.R. Mitchell
Mr N.W. Morton
Dr M.D. Nahan
Mr D.C. Nalder

Mr J. Norberger
Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr M.H. Taylor
Mr A. Krsticevic (*Teller*)

Noes (22)

Ms L.L. Baker
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Ms J. Farrer
Mr B.J. Grylls
Mr W.J. Johnston
Mr D.J. Kelly
Mr F.M. Logan
Mr R.S. Love

Mr M. McGowan
Mr M.P. Murray
Mr P. Papalia
Ms M.M. Quirk
Mr D.T. Redman
Mrs M.H. Roberts

Ms R. Saffioti
Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr P.B. Watson
Mr D.A. Templeman (*Teller*)

Pairs

Mrs L.M. Harvey
Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr J.M. Francis
Mr J.H.D. Day

Ms J.M. Freeman
Ms S.F. McGurk
Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr J.R. Quigley

Amendment thus passed.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 7.01 pm

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