

Legislative Council

Hansard

Tuesday 4 November 2025

The President, Mr Farrell, took the Chair at 11 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People and read Prayers.

[excerpt...]

Voluntary Council Amalgamation

Ms WEBB question to MINISTER for LOCAL GOVERNMENT, Mr VINCENT

[2.57 p.m.]

For clarity, this is a follow-up from our previous sitting week in September, and a question that the Minister for Local Government endeavoured to get back to me on. I will put the questions that were the ones I put into the Chamber then relating to review of councillor numbers and allowances being undertaken, and their relationship to the Future of Local Government Review report.

The questions are:

- (1) Has the phase 1 voluntary amalgamation program as recommended by the 2023 review report been undertaken?
- (2) If so, can you detail when and how that was undertaken and the outcomes of that program?
- (3) Can you confirm that the current review into the councillor numbers and allowances is being undertaken by the Office of Local Government within DPAC and not, in fact, an independent reviewer specifically recommended by that 2023 Future of Local Government Review report, and explain why the government deviated from that part of recommendation 34?

ANSWER

Mr President, the answers to (1) and (2) are that the government is continuing to support the voluntary amalgamation program as part of its priority reform program. It is unlikely any voluntary amalgamations will be completed before the 2026 local government elections.

With regard to question (3), the Local Government Act 1993 provides for changes to councillor numbers to be made by the Governor on the recommendation of the minister, but only in response to the outcomes of a Local Government Board Review. This process does not involve parliamentarians.

The alternative option is for the changes to be enacted through an amendment to the act and for Parliament - not just the minister - to have its say on the amendments.

Informing recommendation 34 of the Future of Local Government Review was the review board's view on how many elected representatives are needed to effectively serve the needs of a particular community, and the merits of having fewer councillors who are

remunerated at a higher level versus a greater number of councillors on relatively lower allowances.

Considering this, as well as the ongoing advocacy from the sector for a review to occur irrespective of amalgamations, the government decided to bring forward the numbers and allowances review.

The government has determined not to undertake a Local Government Board review. This is because it would incur substantial costs due to procedural elements hardwired into the act in respect to such reviews, likely taking too long for the outcomes to be implemented ahead of the 2026 elections. This would mean any change would not be in place until the 2030 elections.

Instead, internal capability to undertake a technical review of councillor numbers and allowances was identified within the Office of Local Government. The proposed reforms have been developed transparently and are now open for broad community consultation.

Ms Webb - Another question?

Mr PRESIDENT - Yes, I will allow this one because we were slightly late starting questions.