



Dadour vote stunt

By ANDREA DOWNEY AND HAMISH HASTIE

The Dadour local poll provisions have become a political tug-o-war as the state government continues work on legislation which could see them removed from the Local Government Act 1995.

Last week member for Victoria Park Ben Wyatt criticised South Perth and Belmont Liberal members for their actions during a motion tabled in parliament, which supported the retention of the provisions in the act.

The provisions could kill an amalgamation plan if a majority of 50 per cent of ratepayers in one council area vote against it.

Removal of the provisions has been met with resistance from Labor members and Liberal backbenchers.

Mr Wyatt, who moved the motion for the house to support the retention of the poll provisions on September 18, concluded the debate on October 16.

During the vote South Perth member John McGrath left the chamber while Belmont's Glenys Godfrey voted against the motion.

Mr Wyatt said he deliberately drafted the motion to be non-confrontational so it did not condemn the government.

"It simply said that the house supports the retention of the Dadour local poll provision in the local government act," he said.

"It was really just to flush out members who were going to stick to their word or not.

"Johnny McGrath got out of there lickity-split but Glenys decided to stay and vote against the motion.

"The fact that neither were willing to support the motion causes me concern because we'll end up now willing to accept that the Dadour provision will be removed or significantly amended."

Ms Godfrey voted against the motion because of the way it was handled.

"During private member's business, there was a lengthy debate about another motion moved by the opposition, leaving only 10 minutes for the debate and the vote on the motion," she said.

"This was a deliberate move by the opposition, which meant that Ben Wyatt was the only person allowed to speak on the issue.

"The Dadour provision has not yet been debated in the Liberal party room, so I voted against the way this issue was handled."

Mr McGrath abstained from voting because it was a political stunt.

"My position is well known, I don't support forced amalgamations and I don't support the poll provisions being taken out of the local government act ... I think the people have to be able to have some say in what we do with their local government," he said.

Mr McGrath said amalgamations would be forced if the provisions were removed.

Local Government Minister Tony Simpson was surprised at the numbers of votes against the motion.

"I was surprised that most people didn't support the vote, given everything you see in the papers I thought we would struggle," he said.

"I am trying to work with the upper house members that have got a bit of a bee in their bonnet to finalise the legislation.

"I can't dictate what my party room will do I am just trying to get a consensus across the line, it's the upper house where the problem lies as you would have seen from the vote in the lower house only one person didn't vote."

Mr Simpson said at the moment amalgamations were not forced.

"The argument is that by using my parliamentary power to remove the poll provisions I am forcing them because I am taking away that process, that is where John McGrath's comments come from," he said.



Member for Victoria Park Ben Wyatt moved a motion last week to support the retention of the Dadour poll provisions in the Local Government Act. Photoaraph — Matt Devlin.