

# Council cull costs \$20m

**EXCLUSIVE**  
**PETER LAW**

THE Barnett Government's botched plan to slash the number of councils in Perth has cost ratepayers almost \$20 million.

The bill includes consultancy, legal, and publicity expenses, plus the cost of tens of thousands of hours in council staff time.

Most councils are now considering submitting a combined multimillion-dollar compensation claim to the State Government.

The WA Local Government Association has offered to facilitate the joint bid to recoup "reasonable" costs.

It comes as Cabinet tomorrow decides whether to rescind the Governor's orders for boundary changes due to come into effect on July 1.

A survey by *The Sunday Times* this week found 21 councils estimate Premier Colin Barnett's failed local government reform cost at least \$17 million.

A fraction of this was covered by government grants and the final bill will be higher as some councils did not include the cost of staff time. A further five councils are still calculating their costs.

The sum also does not include State Government costs, which Labor suggested is another \$20 million.

Cockburn, which led calls for compensation, says planning for its merger with Kwinana cost \$2.9 million, including \$2.2 million in staff time.

The next highest was at Swan (\$2.2 million), Fremantle (\$1.4 million), Mundaring (\$1.25 million), Melville (\$1.1 million), Bayswater (\$1 million) and South Perth (\$1 million).

Even small councils incurred big bills, including Peppermint

Grove (\$240,000) and Mosman Park (\$500,000), which together have less than 10,000 ratepayers.

Mr Barnett's plan to cut the number of metropolitan councils from 30 to 16 was dumped after communities given the chance to vote rejected the forced mergers.

South Perth, which spent \$65,000 on court action with

Subiaco and Serpentine Jarrahdale, will this week consider a compensation claim.

Belmont, Melville, Stirling and Fremantle are among other councils to confirm they will seek to recoup costs.

Some councils argue they should be reimbursed through the \$15 million set aside by the State Government to fund the reform. The City of Perth, now likely the only council whose boundaries will change, estimates its costs are at least \$650,000, excluding staff time.

Local Government Minister Tony Simpson was unavailable for interview this week ahead of tomorrow's Cabinet meeting.

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## THE BREAKDOWN

Armadale: .....	\$220,000*
(year to date)	
Bassendean: ....	\$200,000
Bayswater: .....	\$1 million
Belmont: .....	\$287,000
Cambridge: ....	\$500,000
Canning: .....	\$600,000*
Claremont: .....	\$50,000*
Cockburn: .....	\$2.9 million
Cottesloe: .....	TBC
East Fremantle: .....	TBC
Fremantle: .....	\$1.4 million
Gosnells: .....	\$500,000*
Kalamunda: ....	\$400,000
Kwinana: .....	TBC
Melville: .....	\$1.1 million
Mosman Park: ....	\$500,000
Mundaring: .....	\$1.25 million
Nedlands: .....	\$100,000*
Peppermint Grove:	\$240,000
Perth: .....	\$650,000*
Serpentine Jarrahdale: .....	
.....	\$760,000
South Perth: .....	\$1 million
Stirling: .....	\$810,000**
Subiaco: .....	TBC
Swan: .....	\$2.2 million
Victoria Park: .....	\$700,000
Vincent: .....	TBC
<b>TOTAL: .....</b>	<b>\$17.3 million</b>

\*Excluding cost of staff time.

\*\*Partial cost of staff time.