

COST OF LIVING — COMMUNITY SERVICES SECTOR

4. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:

I note the escalating cost-of-living crisis impacting WA families and the additional pressure being placed on service providers such as Foodbank, which support those in need. Will the government commit to matching the opposition's call for the provision of \$300 million over two years to support the community services sector and help ease some of the cost-of-living pressures on our most vulnerable?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

Since we have been in office, we have done a lot of things to support not only the charity sector, but also the community with cost-of-living pressures. As I outlined before, we have put more effort into assisting families with cost-of-living pressures than any other government in Australia, through \$1 000 in credits on electricity bills and capped public transport fares. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when access to and the cost of RATs was out of control in the eastern states, we provided them free to people across the state. The capping of regional airfares depending on how far someone is from Perth is an amazing contribution to cost-of-living pressures for people around the state. There have been numerous other initiatives as well to support cost-of-living pressures.

The other point is that we have supported charities around the state. The indexation arrangements for charities have been improved and, as they asked for, they are now eligible to receive more financial support in terms of annual grants than before. We worked with the Western Australian Council of Social Service and other charities to ensure that the indexation arrangements were supported for charities around Western Australia. On top of that, I actually approached Lotterywest and asked it to support a significant increase in its emergency and crisis relief support for families around the state. Lotterywest has done that, increasing its support program to \$30 million—a significant increase in support for those organisations around Western Australia. Lotterywest is a state government organisation that has an independent board, but it is always pleased to provide that sort of support for those organisations.

There have been numerous other things. I add that the state government's funding for the National Disability Insurance Scheme is climbing very significantly. From memory, it went up by \$300 million in the last budget. That will continue to support the NDIS and people with disabilities, which is a joint state–commonwealth responsibility. We have put enormous effort into all these things over our term of office to ensure that we have the best cost-of-living support of any state government in Australia.