

WATER — RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES

975. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Water:

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! It is getting closer—one week, two hours and 10 minutes. Calm down.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to Cathy, a single mother who lives in a small unit in Como, who I would like to quote —
I am unemployed. I am finding water bills the hardest to pay. My last bill was \$6.90 water usage and amounted to over \$200 because of service charges.

Can the minister explain to Cathy why her water bill is \$200 when she uses only \$6.90 of water?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

I thank the member for Cottesloe. Can I explain to his constituent —

Several members interjected.

Mr D.J. KELLY: Sorry, from Como.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr D.J. KELLY: Can I explain to the member for Cottesloe that it has been the case with water bills for as long as—I do not know; for as long as Parliament has been here, probably—that there has a component for service charge and a component for water usage. The first part is for fixed costs in the system. The second part is for the water people actually use. I think the point of the member's question is how is it that the service charge is so high and the water usage component is so low, and someone like Cathy feels aggrieved that no matter how frugal she is with her water use, she still cannot get over the big fixed charge. The member will probably be surprised, because I am not sure that he paid too much attention to the budget that we handed down, but in the last budget that we handed down, if he remembers, the budget that the former government left us with would have had a six per cent increase in the service charge and a six per cent increase on the water usage component.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine!

Mr D.J. KELLY: So Cathy's service charge would have gone up by six per cent had members opposite still been in government. What we did in the last budget was halve the increase on the service charge. So Cathy's increase under us was half of what it would have been had members opposite still been in government. We recovered the income that we lost by not increasing the service charge by the six per cent the former government had planned, and we used that to give a price signal to the biggest users, many of whom live in the member for Cottesloe's electorate. That is precisely to assist a constituent like Cathy, who has to pay a service charge and a water usage charge. She is really frugal with her water usage, so rather than slug her with a six per cent increase on the service charge, which the former government had planned, we halved that increase. So the member for Cottesloe should go back and tell Cathy that he has raised this with the Minister for Water, and I have explained to him —

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine!

Mr D.J. KELLY: — that it is precisely people like Cathy who we are concerned about. That is why we have halved the increase on the service charge and sent a price message to the people who use much more water than she does.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine, I call you to order for the third time.