

WATER — PENSIONER REBATES — PUBLIC HOUSING, BUSSELTON

710. Mr D.T. PUNCH to the Minister for Water:

- (1) Can the minister update the house on how the McGowan Labor government is supporting pensioners in public housing in Busselton to reduce the cost of their water bills?
- (2) Can the minister advise how this government's approach compares to the way those same pensioners were treated by the previous Liberal–National government?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

I thank the member for Bunbury for the question.

- (1)–(2) I am delighted to update the house. As most members in this house know, being good local members, pensioners are entitled to a 50 per cent rebate on a portion of their water usage. That applies across Western Australia, unless, of course, up until now, they lived in the area serviced by Busselton Water. Until now, pensioners in public housing in the area serviced by Busselton Water had been denied that 50 per cent rebate.

Ms M.J. Davies: The cheapest water in the state.

Mr D.J. KELLY: What did I hear? What a disgrace?

Ms M.J. Davies: The cheapest water in the state.

Mr D.J. KELLY: Sorry; the member for Central Wheatbelt said that they do not deserve it because they get the cheapest water in the state.

Several members interjected.

Point of Order

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The minister is misleading what the member for Central Wheatbelt said.

The SPEAKER: Excuse me. When you have a point of order, you get up, you tell me what the point of order is. You just do not say that the minister did that. What is your point of order?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The minister is misrepresenting the Leader of the Nationals WA and the comments that she made.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

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

Mr D.J. KELLY: When I discovered that pensioners in public housing in Busselton were denied that pensioner rebate, I immediately set about to remedy that situation.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

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

Mr D.J. KELLY: What it required were some discussions with the Minister for Housing in order to ensure that Busselton Water and the Department of Communities would talk to each other to identify those public housing tenants who were entitled to the rebate, and the rebate is now available to them. There are potentially 500 people.

Ms R. Saffioti: You'd think the local member would support it?

Mr D.J. KELLY: Yes; you would like to think so.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Transport!

Mr D.J. KELLY: There are approximately 500 pensioners in the Busselton area who until now have not had that rebate available to them. It staggers me that the previous government allowed this situation to continue. Just in case members are wondering, it required discussions between the Minister for Water and the Minister for Housing to get this done. I could do put your hands up if you were a Minister for Water in the previous government, but I will not do that; I will let members know. Graham Jacobs was one Minister for Water. The member for Nedlands was a Minister for Water under the previous government, and he did nothing about this issue. The member for Warren–Blackwood was a Minister for Water and he did nothing to remedy this situation. Surprise, surprise—the member for Central Wheatbelt was also a Minister for Water under the previous government and she did nothing about it. As she just indicated, she believes the residents of Busselton do not deserve it because they have the cheapest water in the state. I do not care. Pensioners deserve every rebate they are entitled to, including pensioners in public housing in Busselton. Four ministers for water did nothing about this in eight and a half years.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 20 September 2018]

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Mr Donald Punch; Mr Dave Kelly; Mr Vincent Catania; Mrs Liza Harvey

Ministers for housing—they are the landlords—should have taken an interest in this. Under the previous government, of course, we had Troy Buswell, who was the first Minister for Housing. He was also the member for Vasse, remember. He did nothing to assist his constituents.

Point of Order

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The minister has now been on his feet for over four minutes. It is a dorothy dixer in question time before a two-week break.

Ms S. Winton interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo, I call you to order for the first time. Wrap this up, minister.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr D.J. KELLY: It is a long list. I will go through them quickly. After Troy Buswell, we had the member for Nedlands, who was the Minister for Housing, who went from the water portfolio to the housing portfolio. We had Troy Buswell again, who did nothing about it. We then had the member for Warren–Blackwood, who became the Minister for Housing having been the Minister for Water; he did nothing about it. The housing portfolio went back to the member for Nedlands. Again, he did nothing about it. It then went to Hon Colin Holt, who did nothing about this issue. It then went to Hon Brendon Grylls, the then member for Pilbara, as Minister for Housing, who did nothing about it. On my calculations, that is four ministers for water and seven ministers for housing who did nothing about dealing with this issue to ensure pensioners in public housing in Busselton got the rebates that they deserved.

The only person I will give any credit to on the other side on this issue is the current member for Vasse, who last year wrote to me, urging me to get on and remedy this problem. Mind you, she had been the local member since October 2014 and had not managed to get the issue resolved. After two years as a government backbencher, the issue was not resolved. I am pleased to inform the house and the member for Vasse that I have now resolved this issue so that public housing tenants in the seat of Busselton now get the rebates that they deserve.