

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RATES — INCREASES

426. Mr P. PAPALIA to the Premier:

I refer to the Premier's answer in this house last week when questioned about increases in council rates, in which he said —

... some rate increases are extraordinarily high. Although an increase in the price of electricity and in landfill levies are factors, in no way do they account for the increase in some council rates.

- (1) What does the Premier say in response to the Mayor of Joondalup, Troy Pickard, who said that raising rates to 7.9 per cent was not done lightly but that there was pressure from the government rises in the utilities?
- (2) Is the Mayor of Stirling, David Boothman, misinformed when he states that at a 6.6 per cent rise in rates flowed from the increased costs of fuel, energy, building materials, contract labour, inflation and government fees?
- (3) Is the Mayor of Cockburn, Logan Howlett, incorrect when he states that there was no doubt government cost increases added a significant burden?
- (4) Are these council mayors misleading the public or is the Premier?

Mr C.J. BARNETT replied:

- (1)–(4) I am aware that the City of Stirling at least sent out a notice with its rate accounts, basically attributing—I will take the member's figure—a 6.6 per cent increase to electricity prices and the levy. I do not know the exact figure. Maybe if the member had asked the question of the Minister for Local Government, he might have been able to provide some detail. Had the member himself done some research, he might have been able to determine —

Mr E.S. Ripper: You do not know and you blame him for not doing research.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I did not ask the question. If the member believes that a rate increase of 6.6 per cent in Stirling or 7.9 per cent in Joondalup is solely attributable to a rise in electricity rates —

Mr E.S. Ripper: We quote the mayors. What are you saying?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I have not seen their notices. I am sure that someone will give me one to look at soon. If the mayors of those councils are trying to defend their rate increase, which is over twice the rate of inflation, on the basis of a rise in electricity prices, they are misleading their ratepayers. There is no doubt about it; they are misleading their ratepayers. I would be interested in, and maybe the Minister for Local Government or his agency might be able to provide us with some breakdown of, what proportion of that rate increase can be accounted for by a rise in electricity prices. But it will be a small proportion. For them to send out a notice like that is, frankly, misleading. I am not very impressed with councils that do that. If they wanted to draw attention to the increase in electricity prices, which is a cost factor, they should have given a breakdown of the composition of their rate increases and told the ratepayers, for example, in the case of Joondalup, how the 7.9 per cent increase is accounted for. That would have been honest, but they did not do that.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes, I did, by the \$1 billion loss that the Labor government left us.