

WATER — RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES

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

I have a supplementary question. Does the minister accept that his government's \$700 per year cost-of-living increases are really hurting struggling —

Ms S.E. Winton interjected.

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

Dr D.J. HONEY: Does the minister accept that his government's \$700 per year cost-of-living increases are really hurting struggling Western Australians, and that the extra \$500 cost-of-living increases on the way will put people like Cathy under even further stress?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

The self-confessed member for struggle street is really not paying attention.

The SPEAKER: Minister, you will refer to the member by their electorate.

Mr D.J. KELLY: Sorry. The member for Cottesloe is really not paying attention. As the member well understands, the price increases that we have put in place for water for the last two budgets have been less than the price increases that would have occurred had the former government remained in government.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr D.J. KELLY: The Leader of the Opposition, who was Treasurer at the time, went to the election with two, six per cent across-the-board increases in water charges.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for North West Central, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr D.J. KELLY: They are in denial. The increases that we have put in place have been less.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Mr D.J. KELLY: I cannot hear myself think. The increases that we have put in place have been less.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, please! We are nearly there.

Mr D.J. KELLY: The increases we have put in place have been less. They have been structured so that people like Cathy did not get a six per cent increase in her service charge; she only got a three per cent increase in her service charge. We have structured them differently. And we have put in place a host of arrangements in the Water Corporation to make it easier for people who are having difficulty paying their bills. I just remind the member for Cottesloe that when the Leader of the National Party was the Minister for Water, 10 families a day were having their water restricted and reduced to a trickle because they could not pay their bills—10 families a day—and the National Party and the Liberal Party did nothing about it. In 18 months, we have reduced the number of people who are having their water restricted by 60 per cent, just by talking to them. The price increases have been smaller. They have been structured in a way to assist people who are frugal with their water use. We are talking to people who are having trouble paying their bills so that there is less trauma on their family. That is demonstrated again by the fact that the number of people who are paying interest on their water bills has significantly reduced. So on every measure —

The SPEAKER: Minister, wind it up, please.

Mr D.J. KELLY: On every measure, we are making it easier for people to pay their water bills.