

STATE BUDGET 2023–24 — COST-OF-LIVING MEASURES

**296. Mrs L.A. MUNDAY to the Premier:**

Before I ask my question, I would like to give a big shout-out to Rosalie Primary School students for the member for Nedlands and to the kids and principal, Peter Beckingham, from Halls Head Primary School, which is in my electorate.

I refer to measures included within the McGowan Labor government's recent budget to help reduce the costs of living.

- (1) Can the Premier please advise how the measures will assist households and small businesses during the current wave of inflation and interest rate rises?
- (2) Can the Premier outline to the house the McGowan Labor government's record on delivering genuine cost-of-living relief?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I thank the member for Dawesville for the question.

- (1)–(2) One of the focuses of last week's budget was to continue to have Western Australia as the most affordable state in the nation, and that is what we have achieved. The budget has more than \$715 million going towards cost-of-living pressures for Western Australians. From July, every household will receive a \$400 electricity credit, received in two instalments—the third electricity credit in less than three years. The first electricity credit was \$600 in late 2020; the second one of \$400 was in last year's budget and the one in this year's budget is \$400. But there is more targeted relief for those who need it more. One-third of households, or 350 000 households in Western Australia that are eligible for the energy assistance payment will receive a total of \$826 off their electricity bills. There are two tiers: \$826 for 350 000 households and \$400 for the other two-thirds of households. I am very proud of the fact that a lot of people out there who never receive any support from the government and who work hard and might be just above the threshold for some sort of support will get a bit of support from our government. They are deserving people who need a bit of support in what is a relatively high inflation environment across Australia, although it is lower in Western Australia. We are able to do that because we managed the finances well. We paid off much of the debt and deficit that we inherited from the Liberals and Nationals in office and we kept the electricity corporations in public hands. The former Liberal–National government wanted to sell them off—at least the majority of Western Power. In 2006–07 under Premier Alan Carpenter, we put in place the domestic gas policy, which is now the envy of Australia. All those things meant that we avoided a lot of the crises occurring elsewhere.

In the last year, power prices in New South Wales went up 25.7 per cent and in Queensland they went up 20 per cent. In the other states it was anywhere from eight per cent upwards. Ours went up 2.5 per cent and we gave everyone a \$400 electricity credit which meant, in effect, that the price of a basket of household goods went down and, indeed, this year, they have gone down again. The comparison is stark. Under the last government, which had eight and a half years in office, on average electricity prices went up 8.4 per cent a year—90 per cent over eight years. That is how much they went up. TAFE and water fees went up by remarkably high levels. At a time when the government had incredibly strong revenues, the former government managed to blow costs for households and push debt up to \$44 billion across the forward estimates from \$3.6 billion after it arrived in office. That was quite an achievement that had never been seen before in Western Australia. Fortunately, we have a government that is dealing with these issues. The cost of living is a big focus in the budget and we are very proud of that.