

COST OF LIVING — FEES AND CHARGES

498. Ms E.L. HAMILTON to the Premier:

Before I ask my question, can I acknowledge Mr Butt, Mrs Baily and the student leaders at Edgewater Primary School who are joining us in the public gallery.

I refer to the Cook Labor government's commitment to assisting all Western Australians with current cost-of-living pressures.

- (1) Can the Premier update the house on the delivery of the \$400 household electricity credit?
- (2) Can the Premier advise the house what other cost-of-living measures this government has implemented to support WA families?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I thank the member for the question; it is a very important one. Before I go on to answer it, can I just say on behalf of, I am sure, all of us: go the Matildas, we are looking forward to the game tomorrow night! As I said in my speech this morning, there is nothing that we love better than beating the Poms!

Mr D.T. Punch: What was that?

Mr R.H. COOK: Except perhaps the Minister for Regional Development!

- (1)–(2) We are just two short weeks from the start of spring, or in the Noongar calendar Djilba, which is like “first spring”, so we are nearly done for winter. It is fair to say that it has been a chilly few months. The extra blankets have been out and heaters have been cranked up. For many Western Australians that also means that the energy bills are up. My government understands this. We know that this means that a bit more belt tightening needs to be done and a bit more budgeting for many households. Although the inflation and jobs data is showing positive signs, with WA reporting the lowest inflation rate in the country, with the most jobs and the highest wages, we know that in times like this every dollar counts, and we get that. We know families are doing it tough. Because the WA Labor government has looked after the finances and made sure we have taken responsible financial management in Western Australia, we are able to help. At the last budget we announced a \$400 household electricity credit to be delivered to every household across the state in two instalments. Households would have receiving in their July–August billing cycle their first \$200 relief right in time for winter. The second instalment of credit will help households in the November–December billing cycle, providing a further \$200 off their power bills at a time when a lot of households' budgets are really stretched in the lead-up to Christmas. This builds on the household energy credits that have been provided in recent years. This brings the total relief of energy credits to at least \$1 400 for all 1.1 million WA households. At the same time, we have capped public transport fares and boosted the seniors' cost-of-living rebate. We have kept fees and charges well below inflation.

In addition, small businesses across the state are receiving a credit of \$650, recognising the higher overheads many small businesses are experiencing. It is all made possible because of our strong economic management—like our decision to keep our electricity corporations in public hands and WA's domestic gas policy. Both have ensured our electricity prices have not faced the same dramatic increases as other states. When I look across my local community, I see that this makes a difference. It can be the difference for a family of four between staying home or having a short respite or holiday. It is a difference for a single pensioner. It could be confidence using heating and cooling across the coolest and hottest months. We are proud to deliver financial relief to households during a period of heightened cost-of-living pressures.

We also have our eyes to the future to achieve the goal of a cleaner, affordable and reliable energy future for WA. We are undertaking an exciting transformation of our own energy system. We are investing in infrastructure to ensure that Western Australians can benefit from clean and affordable energy for generations to come. This will lock in gains for WA households into the future, making sure they live not only in a great state but an affordable state, a state that is prosperous and that spreads that prosperity right across the community. We are very proud of our household electricity energy credits because they have allowed all households to get relief at the time they need it.