

COST OF LIVING — FEES AND CHARGES

600. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. Can I confirm that despite growing commentary from WACOSS, Foodbank WA and Carers WA, the Premier is refusing to spend just \$156 million out of his \$6 billion surplus to freeze government fees and charges to relieve the cost-of-living pressures on Western Australian households?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

The Leader of the Opposition's figure is absolutely incorrect. I will get the exact figures later, but it is absolutely incorrect. The thing about opposition members is that the Liberal–National model does not work. They cannot work together. We have seen that in New South Wales. Look at what happens over there when the Liberals and Nationals are in government. We have the National Party, which wants to cut down the forests and kill the koalas and thinks that is a virtue, and we have the National Party, which runs separate processes from those of the Liberal Party. The National Party in NSW is totally irresponsible. I might say that I have talked to some people of note in the New South Wales Liberal Party, who tear their hair out about the National Party there. The model does not work, because they cannot work together in government. The model of what occurred when the Leader of the Opposition was in office was —

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Hold on! Let us go through it. You want to talk about when you were in office! When you were the Minister for Water, you put up water fees by 80 per cent over eight years. When you were sitting in Colin Barnett's cabinet, opposition leader, that is what you did as a minister.

What have we done? We actually have one budget process. We do not have two. The former coalition government had two budget processes—the National Party process and the Liberal Party process. We have one budget process. We have proper Expenditure Review Committee processes. We actually brought public sector expenditure down to arrest the inexorable climb in debt that you left us. We turned deficits into surpluses. We now have the best set of public finances in Australia. We are going to continue to put this state in the best possible position should there be a recession next year. If there is a recession next year and we adopted the former government's model of debt and deficits, opposition members would be coming in here saying, "Why did you do that? What a disaster! What a disgrace! Couldn't you see what was going to occur?" We can foresee what is probable. The federal Treasurer has said that an international recession is quite probable next year. Preparing the state for that eventuality is what we are about. We are not going to listen to irresponsible, profligate, hopeless managers like the Liberals and Nationals.