

WATER CORPORATION — LATE PAYMENTS — INTEREST RATE

**66. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Water:**

I have a supplementary question. Given that the minister has been concerned about this issue, as he has admitted, for over three years, why is he so focused on hurting struggling Western Australians, whether it is by its 11.71 per cent interest rate on late payments, its 40 per cent increase on the top water tariff, or its \$400 a year tax on Western Australian families?

**Mr D.J. KELLY replied:**

Member for Cottesloe, it is pretty galling that anyone from the Liberal Party would talk about hardship issues when it comes to the Water Corporation. When we were in opposition, I raised with the then water minister, a member of the Liberal–National government, the fact that the Water Corporation was cutting off 2 500 Western Australian families every year because they could not pay their water bills—2 500 every year. The response I got was stone cold silence. Almost every year, the numbers just kept increasing over and over. When I came to government, there were a number of things that I wanted to do. I asked the Water Corporation to review how it was dealing with customers in hardship. We have reduced by almost 70 per cent the number of families who were having their water reduced to a trickle for non-payment issues, member Cottesloe—almost 70 per cent. It was 2 500 at the peak of the member for Cottesloe’s government; now, in the last full year, it is under 800. The Financial Counsellors’ Association of Western Australia is an agency that usually writes to government complaining about the way governments deals with hardship. However, Bev Jowl has written me a letter on this very issue, titled “Water Corporation—Review of Financial Hardship Policies, and said —

On behalf of the Financial Counsellors’ Association of WA we write today to convey our thanks and appreciation for the recent changes to the Water Corporations financial hardship policies and processes. We understand that as the Minister for Water, staff at the Corporation were given a directive to look at the area of financial hardship and improve their current responses. Thank you for taking the lead on these matters.

Member for Cottesloe, you did not care about people in hardship who were finding it difficult to pay their water bills. We have done a lot of things in government; I could list them all, but the Speaker would ask me to wind up. The Financial Counsellors’ Association is an organisation that deals with people in hardship; it recognises the work that we have done. If, after 12 months, this is the best the member can do, I look forward to another question in 2022.

**The SPEAKER:** That is the end of question time.