

COST OF LIVING — FEES AND CHARGES

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

I have a supplementary question. Why did the Premier not consider freezing government fees and charges for the 2022–23 budget year to share some of that massive wealth the government has accumulated—\$5.7 billion in surplus—and amassed through GST receipts, increased taxes and record royalties?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

Firstly, the question shows that the Leader of the Opposition does not understand the nature of an operating surplus, and secondly, we did better than freezing it. I will explain it to the Leader of the Opposition again. When we add the \$400 credit into people's household budgets, the cost of services, electricity, water, licensing fees, the emergency services levy, transport fees and the like has gone down by 3.8 per cent. I know she is having difficulty grasping that concept, but across the board, people spend money on everything. They spend money on water and electricity, they get their SmartRider and spend money on that. They get their driver's licence fees, their car rego, whatever it might be; they spend money on all those things. That is what is called the household basket of goods and services that the state government provides. That adds up to a certain amount. Over the coming financial year, the cost of that is going down. We are the only organisation in Western Australia providing services, goods and what have you to people across the state that is actually the putting the cost of those things down. Can anyone, in this high inflation environment, think of another organisation that is doing that? No. At the same time, inflation is going up by greater than the fees we are putting in place for electricity and water and the like.

I want to draw members a comparison. I heard the Leader of the Opposition quote the figures. In eight years of the last Liberal–National government, of which the Leader of the Opposition was Minister for Water for half of that, the cost of goods and services went up by \$2 100. That is around four and a half times the cost of what we have put up goods and services by over our six budgets. In the previous government's eight budgets, it put up the cost of goods and services by four and a half times what we have in our six budgets, and the measures we put in place on Thursday were exactly the measures—I think the Nationals have some sort of joint arrangement with the Liberal Party—supported by Hon Dr Steve Thomas. He came out endorsing what we did. On 13 May he said —

“I actually welcome the \$400 that's going back into people's pockets in an electricity rebate even though not everybody needs it.”

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will explain it to members again. The \$400 is better than a freeze because it gives people more money. I realise the intellectual dexterity in the Liberals and Nationals to understand that is limited, but when we add it in and look at everything that is being done, the cost of goods and services across the board are going down by 3.8 per cent.