

COST-OF-LIVING RELIEF — SENIORS

410. Mr P. LILBURNE to the Minister for Seniors and Ageing:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's commitment to deliver genuine cost-of-living relief for Western Australians.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how this government is providing assistance to ease the cost of living for older Western Australians?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how this compares with the record of the former Liberal–National government?

Mr D.T. PUNCH replied:

I thank the member for this very important question.

- (1)–(2) The Cook government will always work to support our seniors. With the proportion of older people in our state increasing rapidly, it is more important than ever to ensure that our seniors can access concessions and rebates that help address household expenditure. I am very proud that Western Australian seniors can continue to access the most generous range of state government concessions and rebates in Australia, with the soon to be released free *WA Seniors Card discount directory 2023–24*. These directories go like hotcakes, and the 2023–24 edition will be even better. It includes more than 800 discounts from businesses around Western Australia that provide a whole range of goods and services to help older Western Australians with the cost of living. What is really pleasing is that this year, with a dedicated commitment to working with regional businesses, we now have a special listing of 83 regional businesses. I really thank those local businesses that are getting out there and supporting the directory. We will continue to work with regional businesses to increase that number.

We are also taking steps to make sure that WA seniors, no matter where they live, receive the support they are entitled to. With over 400 000 seniors already signed up for the WA Seniors Card, I am on a mission to increase that number. Under this government, we have introduced Seniors Card regional roadshows right around the state. On 41 separate dates this year, our Seniors Card Centre staff will be on the road, meeting people where they live and making sure seniors are getting the maximum cost-of-living benefits from a host of programs.

Our election commitment was to restore the seniors' safety and security rebate, which was axed under the previous Liberal–National government. That program goes from strength to strength. As members would be aware, it provides an opportunity to claim up to \$400 per household for eligible home-security equipment. I am very pleased to inform the house that over 8 000 claims have been made, totalling more than \$3 million.

At this moment we are preparing to deliver a record spend on our seniors' cost-of-living rebate, which is due to eligible seniors next month. WA Seniors Card members will share in more than \$28 million this year. Many members would be aware that this rebate was also cut under the previous Liberal–National government. I am pleased to say that cost-of-living measures for seniors are going to be increased by over \$15.6 million over the next four years as a key part of the Cook government's \$715 million cost-of-living package, delivered in the 2023–24 state budget. Along with this rebate, seniors will continue to have access to a generous range of state government concessions and rebates, including free off-peak public transport—thank you, Minister for Transport; the Country Age Pension Fuel Card—thank you again, Minister for Transport; and concessions on local government rates and water services charges—thank you, Minister for Water and Minister for Local Government.

Ms R. Saffioti: Can I claim that one?

Mr D.T. PUNCH: The Minister for Transport will claim those, too! We have the most generous mix of state government concessions in the whole country. Of course, we also have yet another \$400 electricity credit on the way—thank you, Minister for Energy. The Cook government is ensuring that Western Australian Seniors Card members continue to have access to the greatest range of state government concessions and rebates in Australia. Unlike those opposite, we will always be a friend to WA seniors.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition with the last question.