

COST OF LIVING — FEES AND CHARGES

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

I refer to the *Foodbank hunger report 2022* released yesterday, which paints a shocking picture of the degree of food insecurity across Australia and particularly in Western Australia, with the Foodbank WA CEO confirming that demand for its services has risen dramatically. With 208 000 households going hungry and 116 000 children suffering severe food insecurity in our state, will the Premier immediately freeze government fees and charges to assist in easing the pressure of the cost-of-living emergency in Western Australia?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I will explain it to the opposition again: in the last budget, we actually put fees and charges down. We were the only government in Australia to do that. We put them down by 3.8 per cent. Based upon last year's basket of goods and services, they went down by 3.8 per cent because we gave every household across the state a \$400 electricity credit.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cottesloe, we do not need you to incessantly interject.

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is a benefit that this government has provided to every household across Western Australia that no other government in Australia has provided.

As members may have seen recently, we commissioned a report, I think it was by Deloitte, that looked at cost-of-living pressures in Western Australia compared with other states. The average cost of a home in Western Australia is less than half the cost of a home in New South Wales. In Perth, a home is less than half the cost of a home in Sydney. People can buy a home for less than half what it would cost in Sydney. Compared with Melbourne, it is about two-thirds more expensive to buy a home in Melbourne than in Western Australia. It is the same with Brisbane. In fact, housing costs in Western Australia are the lowest of any state or territory in Australia, so cost-of-living pressures here are not as great as they are in the other states.

Recently, I contacted Lotterywest and asked it to ensure additional support would be provided to organisations like Foodbank. From memory, it is an injection of around \$20 million into those programs this year and I think over the next couple of years at least. That is one of the additional initiatives we have provided, supporting organisations like Foodbank with support from Lotterywest. It was a direct request from the state government, and I am very pleased Lotterywest saw the wisdom of that. We are in an environment, not through any fault of our own but because of a combination of factors, in particular the international situation, in which there has been an increase in inflation, so providing support for people on lower incomes is what we are all about.