

CORONAVIRUS — WA RECOVERY PLAN — WATER CHARGES

706. Ms A. SANDERSON to the Minister for Water:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's support for households through its \$5.5 billion recovery plan, as Western Australia recovers from COVID-19.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house what action this government has taken to support households with their water bills?
- (2) Can the minister outline to the house how this compares with the way households were treated by the previous Liberal–National government?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Morley for that question. As a government, we are very proud of the way that we have responded to COVID-19, particularly in the water portfolio, with the assistance we have given to households to enable them to continue to pay their bills. Unfortunately, these initiatives seem to have been lost on the Leader of the Opposition. Either that or she is deliberately misleading the public. I refer to a tweet —

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Minister, you cannot say “misleading”.

Mr D.J. KELLY: I withdraw that. I thought I would take the opportunity while the member for Dawesville was out of his seat!

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup interjected.

D.J. KELLY: The member for Dawesville might like to look at the tweet that his leader put out yesterday. Yesterday afternoon, at almost three o'clock, the Leader of the Opposition put out a tweet that said “water charges are higher than they have ever been”. One would think that a lazy politician could rely on water charges always going up, so they could always claim that things are higher than they have ever been. Obviously, the Leader of the Opposition either does not know or is omitting to tell people that in actual fact water charges this year, because of COVID-19, have gone down under this government. They have gone down by 1.3 per cent this financial year.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for North West Central!

Mr D.J. KELLY: There has been a \$23 reduction in water charges this year.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for North West Central, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr D.J. KELLY: The Leader of the Opposition put out a tweet yesterday afternoon claiming that water charges are higher than they have ever been. In actual fact, they have gone down this financial year. If she had bothered to look, she would know that it is not a secret. The Treasurer puts out a press release telling people about the basket of fees and charges for households. The Leader of the Opposition just has to listen. She put out a tweet yesterday that is completely wrong. She then went on to say that the government is overcharging households by \$400 for water; that it is recovering \$400 more than it should be. If the Leader of the Opposition paid attention, she would know that the cost reflectivity figure for the Water Corporation is 97 per cent across the state. The Leader of the Opposition has implied that we are overcharging by \$400 a year. My question to the Leader of the Opposition is: Will she cut people's water charges by \$400 if the Liberal Party gets into government? Does she know how much that would cost? There are a million Water Corporation customers in this state—\$400 each is \$400 million. Is that the Leader of the Opposition's policy?

Mrs L.M. Harvey: Talk to the ERA!

Mr D.J. KELLY: I have the Leader of the Opposition's tweet that she put out yesterday. The good news is that no-one is reading her tweets! I had a look and there were four “likes” to that tweet. I thought, “That's not bad; I've put out some dud tweets.” When I looked at the four “likes” to that tweet, two were from the member for Hillarys—apparently he has two Twitter accounts—and one was from Hon Tjorn Sibma; so that is three from the Liberal side. I thought, “That's not bad.” The other one was from a member of the general public. It turns out that the one person

from the general public who “liked” the Leader of the Opposition’s tweet was a bloke called Ron Driscoll, apparently—according to his Twitter account.

The SPEAKER: Minister, can you get back to the answer, please.

Mr D.J. KELLY: It turns out he is a Donald Trump supporter located in South Australia! That is the level of the Leader of the Opposition’s cut-through.

We are very proud of what we have done for household customers in Western Australia. Apart from bringing down water charges this financial year, we have cut the number of disconnections by almost 70 per cent. When the Leader of the Opposition was last in government she was the Deputy Premier, and she was cutting off 2 500 families a year. The Leader of the Opposition is not interested in this: 10 families a day —

The SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr D.J. KELLY: Ten families had their water cut off every day by the former Deputy Premier. We have cut that by 70 per cent. The people at the Water Corporation who did that work and who are now interacting with those customers say it is the most rewarding thing they have done in their career. They have helped struggling families pay their water bills, rather than just ringing up and cutting off their water. That is one of the things that this side of the house is most proud of. We do not have to resort to “porky pies” on Twitter to try to get cut-through. We are helping families during this COVID pandemic and we are proud of it.