

SENIORS CARD

687. MR N.W. MORTON to the Minister for Seniors and Volunteering:

Can the Minister for Seniors and Volunteering outline how seniors in my electorate are being supported by the Liberal–National government?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON replied:

I thank the member for Forrestfield for his question. He is a very strong supporter of seniors in his community. As at 27 July this year, WA Seniors Card holders would have received a cost-of-living payment in their bank accounts to the tune of \$128 per couple and \$85 per single person. WA is the only state in Australia that gives a cash payment to WA Seniors Card holders thought Australia. I acknowledge that the South Australian Labor government changed its local government rebate to a cost-of-living rebate and followed us in that process this year.

More importantly, 370 000 Western Australian seniors have the most generous Seniors Card in Australia. They have just over \$1 000 dollars of value per card. No other state comes near WA.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: No other state comes close to what our Seniors Card can hold. Of course, with that card, there is a discount on water rates, and I just talked about local government rates. More importantly, just added last year was a photo ID card. It is something very simple for seniors. The member for Kingsley, as parliamentary secretary, raised this matter with me back in 2009. We have actually put that through the process now so that seniors who do not have a passport, driver's licence or photo ID and need to have photo ID to get certain medications or even a parcel from the post office have that. That is now part of the concession process and they can access a photo ID card to help them out.

Of course, the most amazing thing is that WA Seniors Card holders have taken advantage of free public transport since we brought that in in 2009—53 million trips, which is absolutely fantastic—through the Minister for Transport. We also extended it last year to off-peak travel. It gives seniors the opportunity to travel around this state, but more importantly they can use their Seniors Card as well. On top of that is also the grandparents support scheme. Again, WA is the only state in Australia that recognises grandcarers in our community with a payment of \$250 towards looking after grandchildren. It is very important to acknowledge the great work our grandcarers do and we recognise them for the fantastic job they do in our community.

When I raised the issue of local government rates, I was very shocked when the member for Forrestfield informed me that the Shire of Kalamunda was charging a \$15 processing fee to access a discount when using a commonwealth pension card or WA Seniors Card. After the quick work of the member for Forrestfield, we got in touch with the Shire of Kalamunda. Neither the Local Government Act nor the rates and charges legislation allows for that, so it has had to withdraw that charge. What concerned me about that is that the president of the shire was the former member for Forrestfield. The only thing I can say is that seniors in Western Australia should be very concerned if the Labor Party gets into government especially if they are going to put a \$15 surcharge on seniors for using their WA Seniors Card.

Mr B.S. Wyatt interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Victoria Park, the member for Midland always goes to great lengths to tell us we are not to call members by their first names, so it is not Mike and Tony and the rest—remember that.