

COUNTRY AGE PENSION FUEL CARD

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

Just before I ask my question, on behalf of the Nationals WA, I, too, offer our condolences to the family, community and first responders impacted by the events over the weekend in Margaret River.

I refer to the Premier's decision not to increase the value of the Country Age Pension Fuel Card in line with the consumer price index. Why does this government think it is fair to increase public transport subsidies to \$958.9 million by 2021–21, yet at the same time provide no increase to the Country Age Pension Fuel Card for pensioners who are unable to access public transport in regional Western Australia?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

Members opposite will note that we kept the Country Age Pension Fuel Card in the budget, which was our commitment to the people of Western Australia. From memory, it is \$500 or thereabouts per annum for a pensioner in regional WA, with the exception of the City of Mandurah as I recall. We are committed to keeping it. In addition, we are upgrading various aspects of rail services to regional Western Australia, or we have kept rail services in regional Western Australia that the National Party was going to close. The *AvonLink*, we kept that operational—the National Party was going to close it. We kept the *Prospector*—the National Party was going to close it.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The National Party was going to close it.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We reinstated the *AvonLink*. As you know, Mr Speaker, we have money in the budget for a significant upgrade to the *Australind* service to Bunbury, and we are also keeping the *Prospector* service in place as well. All those services—it is factual—have a significant subsidy provided to them in order to —

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Please, I am answering the question! Please stop snipping at me! I am answering a question.

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the National Party, you have asked a question and you are doing the answer. Why not just listen, and you might learn something.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We are continuing to provide —

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

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

Mr M. McGOWAN: We continue to provide —

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

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

Mr M. McGOWAN: We are continuing to provide a significant subsidy to those regional train services and we are keeping them, as we should. We are not closing them, like the Liberals and Nationals were going to. On top of that, members will note that we kept in the budget important services in regional Western Australia—electricity, water, school buses and the like—to which the state provides an important subsidy for the people of the regions, as we should. Very important initiatives are kept in the budget by this government. Although there are lots of things we would like to be able to afford, if the National Party had not lost \$40 billion, we would be able to do those things.