

ELECTRICITY — FEES AND CHARGES

**159. Ms A.E. KENT to the Minister for Energy:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to limit cost-of-living pressures for Western Australian households.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how this government is delivering on its election commitment to keep household electricity charges to the rate of inflation?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how Western Australians' electricity charges compare with those experienced in the eastern states?

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:**

What an excellent question from an excellent member!

- (1)–(2) Over the period we have been in government, we have rejected the former government's manner of operating by increasing electricity prices by 97 per cent. We are not following down that pathway. As a result of the strong financial management that the Premier has brought to this government, we have delivered a \$600 household electricity credit, followed by a further \$400 electricity credit—and that is on top of the extra \$318 paid in the energy assistance payment. This is very significant assistance to consumers in Western Australia that has meant we have kept electricity prices below, in net terms, what they were when we came to government.

We have kept our electricity corporations in public hands, we have retained government control of the electricity prices for households as well as small businesses and we have the lowest maximum cap at \$290 here in the Western Australian wholesale market compared with \$15 500 in the national electricity market. We have our domestic gas reservation policy, which keeps low-cost gas—the lowest cost gas in the OECD—to support our consumers. We now see these benefits coming through here in Western Australia.

The Australian Energy Regulator, which sets the default market offer for the east coast, has recently announced its offer from 1 July this year. Sydney, Brisbane and Adelaide are facing price hikes of 20 per cent. That will see an electricity bill in Sydney be \$300 above the same bill here in Western Australia; a consumer in Brisbane will see \$120 to \$140 above a bill here in Western Australia; and, in Adelaide, where it is 100 per cent privatised and there is no government control, they will be \$800 worse off than an average consumer here in Western Australia.

I also note that the National Australia Bank recently published a report on cost-of-living pressures across Australia for the December quarter, and it noted how much better energy prices are in Western Australia compared with those on the east coast, and that the number of Western Australians with challenges paying their electricity bill is nearly half that of the national average. In other words, there are about twice as many people on the east coast in bill distress than is the case here.

We always know that the work is never done—there are always more people to help, and there is always more that the government will do. But, on energy, we know that the results are in. The Western Australian energy system is providing reliable power at a lower cost than anywhere else in the country.