

STUDENT ASSISTANCE PAYMENT

159. MR S.J. PRICE to the Premier:

I refer to the launch of the Cook Labor government's WA student assistance payment.

- (1) Can the Premier advise the house how this payment will support families, parents and carers across WA manage cost-of-living pressures, including the 7 200 households in my community with school-age children?
- (2) Can the Premier advise the house how this payment builds on this government's record of supporting Western Australians with cost-of-living pressures?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. I appreciate the advocacy for families in the member's electorate. Particularly when it comes to school students, we know that Western Australian families are doing it tough. We want to make sure that we utilise the opportunity we have of keeping the state's finances strong so that we can assist those people who are doing it tough at the moment. We know that families with young children are always under the pump when it comes to day-to-day costs and that interest rates are compounding those costs associated with families right across Australia. As a parent, I know there are extra costs during school years, whether it is for stationery, excursions or that desperately needed pair of new school shoes. It can really put a dent in the household budget. That is why we have made the decision to bring in our next cost-of-living relief measure. This time it is aimed at helping families with schoolchildren. It is called the WA student assistance payment. On Sunday, I joined the education minister, Tony Buti, and the member for Bicton to announce this fantastic initiative. We joined the Davey family in their home in Palmyra to hear the impact that school and sport expenses can have. Geoff and Katherine Davey have three kids at school. Geordie, aged 12, is at high school. Meanwhile, Averlee, aged 11, and Parker, aged eight, are both in primary school. The costs add up, and they say every bit counts. We agree.

Under our WA student assistance payment program, they are eligible for \$550. This is how it works. During term 2, parents will receive direct payments of \$250 for every secondary school student and \$150 for every primary school student and kindergarten student. We expect that the initiative will help around 300 000 WA families. This will cost the forthcoming budget \$103.5 million and will be an important assistance to those families. As I said, it is only made possible because of our protection of the state's finances. Families will be able to apply through the ServiceWA app, with the money being deposited directly to their bank account shortly after applying.

We know that the Leader of the Opposition is opposed to the WA student assistance payment. We know that the member for Vasse, the Leader of the Liberal Party, is opposed to it as well.

I am very pleased to say that prior to our announcement, we had fewer than 3 000 visits to the ServiceWA app. Since our announcement, we have had over 40 000 visits to that app each day—and it is not even open yet, as people cannot apply for it until 15 April. We know that Western Australian families are welcoming that, even if the member for Vasse and the Leader of the Opposition are not.

This comes on top of our other measures, which include the electricity credit; to date, every household has received at least \$1 400 in support towards their bills. On public transport, we have delivered the free summer of public transport, free student travels and free travel for everyone on Sundays. We have doubled the allocation of vouchers for KidSport to \$300 per annum, and grandcarers, foster carers, family carers and special guardians have all received one-off payments. We have our rent relief program that supports private renters to keep a roof over their head. We could keep going, but members get the picture. It can be seen that keeping the state's finances strong, keeping our economy strong and assisting families doing it tough are our highest priorities. We will continue to make the investments because we know that these families appreciate the work we are doing to keep the cost of living down.

Visitors — Denmark Senior High School
Distinguished Visitors — Cook Islands Parliament

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [2.10 pm]: On behalf of the member for Warren–Blackwood, I welcome to Parliament today the years 8 to 12 leaders from Denmark Senior High School. I was waiting for some special guests to arrive in the Speaker's gallery. I advise that two staff from the Parliament of the Cook Islands are with us this week on a visit arranged as part of the twinning arrangement between the Western Australian Parliament and the Cook Islands Parliament. We are joined today in the Speaker's gallery by Ms Grace Ioane, senior finance officer, and Mr Unuia Unuia, technical operations officer. Please make Grace and Unuia welcome.

[Applause.]