

FUEL, CITY-COUNTRY PRICE DIFFERENTIAL

**885. Mr MURRAY to the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection:**

I refer to the question asked of the Premier by the member for Ningaloo about fuel prices. In his answer, the Premier referred to the actions of the Court Government upon coming into office, when it removed retail fuel price controls, and its subsequent lack of action to address the increase in the city-country fuel price differential. Can the minister provide the House with further information on city-country fuel prices?

**Mr KOBELKE replied:**

I thank the member for Collie for his question. He has been a strong representative of not only his constituents, but also all rural people in Western Australia, who are paying higher fuel prices than they should.

The question refers to the misrepresentation made by a number of opposition members about the differential in price between fuel bought in Perth and fuel bought in non-metropolitan Western Australia. I will seek leave for two graphs to lie upon the Table. The first graph concerns Geraldton and the second concerns Bunbury. In 1993, prior to the Court Government removing the price control that was in place, the differential between the price of fuel in Geraldton and Perth was 2.8c a litre. The 2000 report of the Select Committee on Petroleum Products Pricing in Western Australia found that the price differential had blown out to 16.5c. The average price differential over the three months to March was down to 10.94c. That still cannot be justified; it is too high. The graph shows that under the previous Government, the fuel differential between Perth and Geraldton rose from 2.8c to 16.5c, and in the year that this Government has been in office, it has gone down to less than 11c. The fuel differential between Perth and Geraldton has reduced by 6c a litre through the efforts of the current Government. In Bunbury, the situation in 1993 -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members! I know that not all members are from the country, but I am interested in hearing the statistics. Please allow the minister to complete his answer.

Mr KOBELKE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I regret that I do not have the figures for your area. I will be happy to provide them.

The differential between petrol prices in Perth and Bunbury in 1993, before the previous Government took away the controls, was 1.3c. The 2000 select committee report found that the differential had increased to 13.5c. It went up by 12c a litre because of the previous Government. In 12 months, this Government has reduced that differential from 13.5c to nearly 4c. That is a more acceptable level. It should still be lower, and the Government will continue to work on it. As we have done over the past 12 months, the Government will continue to deliver on its commitment to non-metropolitan motorists in this State, which is something that the Opposition failed to do when it was in government.