

HOUSEHOLD FEES AND CHARGES — 2022–23 STATE BUDGET

306. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Treasurer:

I have a supplementary question. The Treasurer did not answer my question. How can he justify providing less financial relief to the community at a time of surging inflation than he did when offering an election sweetener in 2020?

The SPEAKER: Just to be clear, you do not give a preamble like, “Premier, you didn’t answer my question”; you just directly ask the question, otherwise I am going to rule your supplementary questions out in future.

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I answered the member’s question. When we provided the relief in October 2020, we used the Bell payment. We received a windfall of \$660 million, or thereabouts.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will tell everyone here; he has that unfortunate affliction!

We received \$660 million or thereabouts as part of the Bell windfall, which we gave straight back to households and which the opposition condemned at the time. That was at a time when there was greater fear about the economy and about COVID, and there was no vaccine; the vaccine had not been invented. The member might recall—it is hard to place ourselves there now—that it was a very, very frightening and dim period in Australia, and people were very worried about what might occur, so we provided some confidence into the economy at that time. We had a windfall, so we had the capacity to do that with it, so that is what we did. We now have in Western Australia probably the highest vaccination rates in the world because of the actions this government took—against some objections, I might add, from many Nationals and Liberals—and we still provided huge cost-of-living relief to families out there, across the state, and we are paying down debt at the same time. Our financial and economic record is actually one of the best in the world; compare us with other governments around Australia. Deloitte said it the other day; Standard and Poor’s have said it: one of the best financial and economic performances in the world. At the same time, we are not loading up debt for future generations like the opposition did when it was in government.