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Hon Troy Buswell BEc MLA

Striking a balance of household costs

Thursday, 9 May 2013

- Electricity prices to rise 4 per cent under responsible and affordable package
- Water charges increase by 6 per cent
- Increased support for families and individuals to pay utility bills

Treasurer Troy Buswell today announced fees and charges for average Western Australian households would increase by around 4.5 per cent, or about \$4.20 a week, in 2013-14.

Mr Buswell said the State Government had worked hard to balance the need to keep increases as low as possible, and meet the need of managing the State's finances in difficult times.

"These increases are a sensible measure that will provide certainty for our State economy, while also supporting Western Australian families and individuals," he said.

"Last year, Western Australian households spent less on household government expenses than every other State and Territory.

"We have worked hard again this year to ensure that State Government fees and charges will remain low in comparison to other States."

From July 1, residential electricity prices will increase by a modest 4 per cent, or \$58 a year.

"While the Government strives to keep any increases to a minimum, and reduce the impact on Western Australian households, reasonable cost increases are necessary to better cover the cost of the services that are provided to the public," the Treasurer said.

"The bottom line is that there is only one pool of money - any money we use to keep power prices artificially low cannot be used to provide services such as schools, hospitals, roads or policing.

"Even with this increase in electricity prices, it is estimated that the Government will need to subsidise Synergy and Horizon Power by \$386million in 2013-14 to cover the shortfall in the cost of delivering electricity."

Other tariff changes to take effect from July 1 include:

- water tariffs will increase by 6 per cent
- public transport fares, with the exception of the 50 cent student fare, will increase by 5 per cent. This is a 20 cent increase in a standard two zone fare. Concession fares will still be 40 per cent below standard fares
- Driver's licence fees will increase by 5 per cent - or \$1.90 - to \$39.50 for a standard one year licence
- Compulsory Third Party Insurance will increase by 4.1 per cent or \$10 a year
- Emergency Services Levy increases by an estimated 7.8 per cent or by \$16.

The Government has also approved a maximum increase to gas prices of 6.4 per cent. It is a commercial decision for gas retailers whether they pass on the full increase to their customers.

Mr Buswell said he understood bill increases, no matter how small, were difficult for some households to absorb, but last year West Australians still spent less on household Government expenses than every other State and Territory.

"While nobody likes it when their bills rise, West Australians will still spend less on electricity than comparable households in Tasmania, South Australia and New South Wales," he said.

"Public transport in WA is also lower than Queensland and New South Wales and is still heavily subsidised by the State Government. Motor vehicle charges remain the lowest in Australia.

"However, we recognise there are some individuals and families who may need support in paying their utility bills, which is why in last year's State Budget the Liberal National Government established the new Cost of Living Assistance (CoLA) payment to help low income Western Australian families with their electricity bills."

CoLA will increase by about \$8 to \$208 from July 1.

Fact File

- Overall household fees and charges to increase by an average of \$4.20 a week
- Electricity prices to increase by 4% in 2013-14 or about \$1.10 a week
- State Government to increase support to households finding it difficult to pay utilities

Treasurer's office - 6552 6400