

Monday 16 March 2020
MEDIA STATEMENT



Household Charges Freeze and Assistance Welcome

The Western Australian Council of Social Service has welcomed the announcement today by Premier McGowan that there will be no increases in household fees and charges, as well as a doubling of the Energy Assistance Payment.

“Utility bills are a significant source of financial stress for households, with mounting bills and disconnections having a significant impact on their wellbeing,” said WACOSS CEO Louise Giolitto.

“The State Government is demonstrating that it recognises the incredible pressures that households are under currently and the need to support them.”

“We have been concerned that energy concessions have not been keeping up with the price increases over recent budget cycles, and so are pleased to see that the State Government is targeting that issue by doubling the Energy Assistance Payment.”

“By keeping household fees and charges steady, people will have a bit more money in their pocket to cover other essential expenditure, like rising rental costs.”

“However, we are really concerned that we still have not yet heard anything announced to assist frontline community services who are delivering direct support to some of the most vulnerable people in our community, including people who are homeless, people with disabilities, older people, people with mental ill health, and victims of family violence.”

These services will be crucial in looking after those most at risk from the coronavirus.

“Alongside this action by the State Government today, we call on utility and telecommunications companies to waive late payments, and pause all debt collection and disconnection processes during this time.”

“Additionally, banks and landlords have a responsibility to support their community, and we encourage them to pause mortgage foreclosures and evictions, as well as instituting a moratorium on loan repayments. “

“Action by the Federal Government is also needed to raise the Newstart Allowance by at least \$95 is essential to drive economic activity and lift people out of poverty.”

Ends.

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