

Cost of Living

WACOSS welcomes the cost of living measures delivered in this Budget. The expansion of School Breakfast Programs and of the Hardship Utility Grant Scheme to cover water debt for public housing tenants, in particular, are well targeted initiatives. Unfortunately, WACOSS does not believe enough has been done to support people experiencing financial hardship. After several years of high inflation and lagging wages, Western Australians on low and fixed incomes are doing it really tough. We are particularly concerned that more Western Australians will end up with utility debt with increased electricity prices and the cessation of the Household Electricity Credit, with nothing to plug that gap.

Table 8.7

| ESTIMATED IMPACT ON THE 'REPRESENTATIVE' HOUSEHOLD | | | | |
|---|---------------------|--------------|----------------|---------------------|
| | 2024-25 \$ level | % change | \$ change | 2025-26 \$ level |
| Utility Charges | | | | |
| Electricity ^(a) | 1,902.06 | 2.5 | 47.55 | 1,949.61 |
| Water, wastewater, and drainage ^{(b) (c)} | 1,868.39 | 2.5 | 46.73 | 1,915.12 |
| Total | 3,770.45 | 2.5 | 94.28 | 3,864.73 |
| Public Transport ^(d) | | | | |
| Student fares ^(e) | – | – | – | – |
| Standard fares ^(f) | 1,198.08 | -16.3 | -195.84 | 1,002.24 |
| Total | 1,198.08 | -16.3 | -195.84 | 1,002.24 |
| Motor Vehicles ^(g) | | | | |
| Vehicle licence charge | 447.56 | 3.9 | 17.28 | 464.84 |
| Driver's licence | 93.70 | 2.9 | 2.70 | 96.40 |
| Recording fee | 8.25 | 15.2 | 1.25 | 9.50 |
| Motor Injury Insurance (MI) | 446.77 | 2.7 | 12.11 | 458.88 |
| Total | 996.28 | 3.3 | 33.34 | 1,029.62 |
| Emergency Services Levy (ESL) ^(h) | 321.93 | 5.0 | 16.10 | 338.03 |
| Stamp Duty ⁽ⁱ⁾ | | | | |
| Stamp duty on general insurance | 284.93 | – | – | 284.93 |
| Stamp duty on MI | 45.89 | – | – | 45.89 |
| Total | 330.82 | – | – | 330.82 |
| Total Expenditure | 6,617.56 | -0.8 | -52.12 | 6,565.44 |

WA Labor 2025 Election Commitments

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| Election Commitment | One Zone Public Transport |
| Status | <i>Funded (BP3, P153)</i> |
| Investment | \$152 million over 4 years |
| Description | From 1 January 2026, the suburban flat fare will be introduced, capping the cost for all travel on the Transperth network at the one-zone rate. |
| Implications | <i>This will assist with the cost of living by making travel across the expanded network more affordable and accessible.</i> |

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| Election Commitment | PATS expansion |
| Status | <i>Partially Funded (BP2, V1, P303 & P305)</i> |
| Investment | \$18.5 million over 4 years |
| Description | \$18.5 million to increase the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme fuel subsidy from \$0.26 per kilometre to \$0.40 per kilometre, supporting country residents required to travel to access specialist medical treatment. Election commitment included an additional \$15.5 million to expand eligibility for the Scheme. This is absent from this Budget. |
| Implications | <i>Additional funding for the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS) will help ensure regional and remote Western Australians continue to have access to specialist health care located in regional hubs or the Perth Metro region. Further funding is welcomed but is not enough to meet the high cost of accessing healthcare in regional WA, as raised in the WACOSS SBS, a review of the program is needed, as its current form is burdensome, inefficient, and not meeting people's needs.</i> Note: There is the \$18.5m outlined in the budget increasing per km rates and a commitment of \$15.5m for an expansion of eligibility that is not in the budget – Media release |

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| Election Commitment | Reduction in TransWA fares |
| Status | <i>Funded (BP3, P150)</i> |
| Investment | \$18.2 million over 4 years |
| Description | To halve TransWA fares for all regional train and bus services from 1 January 2026 |
| Implications | <i>This will reduce the cost of public travel across regional areas.</i> |

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| Election Commitment | Hardship Utility Grant Scheme Expansion – Social Housing Tenants |
| Status | <i>Partially Funded (BP3, P143 & P145 & BP2, V2, P493)</i> |
| Investment | \$1.3 million over 4 years |
| Description | An additional \$1.3 million will be spent over 2025-26 to 2028-29 to expand the eligibility criteria for the Hardship Utility Grant Scheme to include water bill assistance for social housing tenants. Eligible households can expect to receive financial assistance averaging \$529 per annum off their water bills. Election commitment for this initiative promised \$2.2 million in funding. |
| Implications | <i>This will offer meaningful debt relief for public housing tenants with water debt, addressing in part the inequitable exclusion of tenants from HUGS for water bills.</i> <i>It is concerning to see the investment over the outyears is less than was committed pre-election. We also understand this grant money will be</i> |

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| | <i>quarantined from usual HUGS money, running the risk that not all public housing tenants who need water debt relief will have access.</i> |
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| Election Commitment | School Breakfast expansion |
| Status | <i>Funded (BP2, V1, P353 & P354 & BP3, P129)</i> |
| Investment | \$28.5 million over 4 years |
| Description | The Government will invest an additional \$28.5 million over 2025-26 to 2028-29 to expand the School Breakfast Program from two to five days per week for schools currently participating in the program, and to expand the program to additional schools under broadened socio-economic eligibility criteria. The program will be available at over 670 locations under the expanded program. The Budget Papers further commit to funding beyond the four outyears, with a total investment of \$37.2 million over 2025-26 to 2029-30. |
| Implications | <i>This targeted cost of living relief will meaningfully reduce food costs for families doing it tough. It will also encourage school engagement and set kids up to learn.</i> |

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| Election Commitment | Student Assistance Payments |
| Status | <i>Funded (BP2, V1, P354 & BP3, P295)</i> |
| Investment | \$87.9 million 2024-25 & 2025-26 |
| Description | This is the second round of the Western Australian Student Assistance Payment through the ServicesWA App to provide financial support to Western Australian families to help cover school-related expenses. This closes July 2025. |
| Implications | <i>This provides a small rebate to families with school age children.</i> |

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| Election Commitment | Increase the regional pensioner travel allowance |
| Status | <i>Funded (BP2, V2, P547)</i> |
| Investment | \$25.7 million over 4 years |
| Description | Increase the value of the Regional Pensioner Travel Card by a further \$100 each year (from \$675 to \$775) from 2025-26. |
| Implications | <i>With rising costs, viable transport alternatives provide significant value for those living in regional areas. This investment makes these options more affordable for pensioners and encourages the utilisation of public transport, which has positive environmental impacts.</i> |

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| Election Commitment | Residential Battery Scheme |
| Status | <i>Funded (BP3, P108 & P110 & BP2, V1, P200)</i> |
| Investment | \$387 million over 4 years |

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| Description | <p>The Residential Battery Scheme will support the purchase and installation of residential batteries to reduce household electricity bills and facilitate the transition to clean energy. This investment includes the provision of interest-free loans to eligible households and rebates on the cost of residential batteries.</p> |
| Implications | <p><i>This is a positive initiative to support household participation in the energy transition. Unfortunately, it will be inaccessible for low income households due to the significant cost of living pressures they are facing. Targeted support for low income households to access consumer energy resources is critical to a fair and fast transition.</i></p> |