

Cost of Living

Cost-of-living pressures continue to intensify for many Western Australians, with rising prices for essentials - like housing, energy and food - outpacing income growth. For people on low and fixed incomes, even small increases in everyday costs can have significant impacts, forcing difficult trade-offs between basic needs. These pressures are compounded in regional areas, where access to affordable housing and services is more limited, leaving many households under sustained financial strain.

We welcome the targeted cost-of-living measures in this budget, particularly the 10 per cent increase to the Energy Assistance Payment, the extension of the WA Rent Relief Program and additional support for foster carers and grandcarers.

However, these measures fall short of addressing the rising cost-of-living pressures facing Western Australians. While the new \$100 Fuel Support Payment will provide some modest relief, it is broadly distributed and unlikely to reach those most in need.

We are particularly concerned that, as electricity prices rise, there is no meaningful additional relief and that the Hardship Utility Grants Scheme has not been expanded. This budget misses an opportunity to deliver targeted support for renters, people on low incomes and those in regional areas who continue to face significant financial strain.

ESTIMATED IMPACT ON THE 'REPRESENTATIVE' HOUSEHOLD

Table 8.7

	2025-26 \$ level	% change	\$ change	2026-27 \$ level
Utility Charges				
Electricity ^(a)	2,030.54	2.75	55.84	2,086.38
Water, wastewater, and drainage ^{(b) (c)}	1,915.12	2.75	52.59	1,967.71
<i>Total</i>	3,945.66	2.75	108.43	4,054.09
Public Transport ^(d)				
Student fares ^(e)	—	—	—	—
Standard fares ^{(f) (g)}	1,002.24	-18.2	-181.98	820.26
<i>Total</i>	1,002.24	-18.2	-181.98	820.26
Motor Vehicles ^(h)				
Vehicle licence charge	464.84	3.9	17.92	482.76
Driver's licence	96.40	2.5	2.42	98.82
Recording fee	9.50	2.1	0.20	9.70
Motor Injury Insurance (MII)	458.88	3.1	14.32	473.20
<i>Total</i>	1,029.62	3.4	34.86	1,064.48
\$100 Fuel Support Payments ⁽ⁱ⁾	—	—	-200.00	-200.00
Emergency Services Levy	337.35	5.0	16.80	354.15
Stamp Duty ^(j)				
Stamp duty on general insurance	309.89	—	—	309.89
Stamp duty on MII	47.32	—	—	47.32
<i>Total</i>	357.21	—	—	357.21
Total Expenditure	6,672.08	-3.3	-221.89	6,450.19

Initiative	Fuel Support Payment <i>(BP2, V2, P532, 548) (BP3, P162, P347)</i>
Investment	\$198 million over 2025-26 and 2026-27.
Description	Providing \$100 to all Western Australians with a driver's licence via the ServiceWA app to assist with higher fuel prices.
Implications	<i>While this initiative provides a small fuel rebate to all Western Australians with a driver's licence, it is not sufficiently targeted to those who are doing it the toughest. As the payment is being delivered through ServicesWA app considerations are required for how those experiencing digital exclusion, who are also more likely to need the support, will be able to access these payments.</i>

Initiative	WA Student Assistance Payment <i>(BP2, V1, P62, P344, P360) (BP3, P44, P136,)</i>
Investment	\$89 million in 2026-27.
Description	Third round of the WA Student Assistance Payment (\$150 for each primary and kindergarten student, and \$250 for each secondary school student) via the ServiceWA app.
Implications	<i>This provides a small rebate to families with school-aged children. As the payment is being delivered through ServicesWA app considerations are required for how those experiencing digital exclusion, who are also more likely to need the support, will be able to access these payments.</i>

Initiative	Targeted support for foster carers and grandcarers <i>(BP3, P4, P6, P102, P153, P178, P179)</i>
Investment	\$44.3 million over four years.
Description	This initiative provides targeted support to foster carers and grandcarers including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$24 million for a 10 per cent uplift to the Carer Subsidy, Respite and Clothing Allowance • Additional \$10.3 million over four years for a new Foster and Grandcarer Gold Card • \$6 million over four years to increase base funding for the Grandcarers Support Scheme, including \$1.3 million for a cost-of-living payment in 2026-27 Registration for the first round begins on 1 July 2026 through the ServiceWA app.
Implications	<i>We welcome this targeted cost-of-living assistance to support foster carers and grand carers. Concessions and benefits from the Gold Card will include energy bill relief of \$337, with additional benefits and discounts to</i>

	<i>help with everyday expenses to be rolled out in future. Over time the success of this initiative may provide a model to extend to others in need.</i>
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Initiative	Passenger Transport Subsidy Scheme (BP2, V2, P533, P541, P545) (BP3, P163)
Investment	\$51.6 million over four years.
Description	An additional \$51.6 million will be spent (2026-27 to 2029-30) on the Passenger Transport Subsidy Scheme. This important scheme provides subsidised travel in on-demand rank or hail (taxi) vehicles for people with a disability, promoting an accessible and inclusive community.
Implications	<i>This scheme aims to facilitate independence and equitable access to healthcare for people with disabilities by reducing financial barriers to transport.</i>

Initiative	WA Rent Relief Program Extension (BP2, V2, P514) (BP3, P6, P152, P158, P190)
Investment	\$13.5 million in 2026-27.
Description	This is a one-year extension to the WA Rent Relief Program which assists eligible tenants in private rental homes who are experiencing rental stress, or who are in rental arrears and at risk of eviction, with a one-off payment of up to \$5,000.
Implications	<i>The WA Rent Relief Program is an important measure to support renters experiencing acute financial pressure in a tight housing market. The program provides critical short-term assistance to help prevent housing instability and homelessness. However, given ongoing rental affordability challenges, we think the program should have been extended for two years to provide greater certainty and sustained relief for households doing it tough.</i>

Initiative	Energy concessions (BP3, P6, P112, P176, P317, P319)
Investment	\$51 million.
Description	This bundle of concessions providing electricity cost relief to concession card holders includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 10 per cent increase to Energy Assistance Payment, Dependent Child Rebate and Air Conditioning Allowance • \$16 million over two years to extend the Energy Ahead program, reaching an additional 8,000 Synergy and 386 Horizon Power low-income customers

Implications	<i>These measures are a welcome and necessary response to rising energy costs, providing targeted relief to pensioners and concession customers. As energy costs continue to rise, there remains a need for broader measures to ensure more low-income households can access meaningful relief.</i>
Initiative	KidSport vouchers (BP3, P6, P7, P114, P316)
Investment	\$5.5 million in 2026-27.
Description	Continue \$300 KidSport vouchers to be used towards club sporting fees for children aged between five and 18 from eligible families with a concession.
Implications	<i>Offers some targeted relief to families to support kids active participation in healthy social activities.</i>

Initiative	Free public transport on Sundays and for students travelling to and from school (BP2, V2, P568) (BP3, P6, P95 P318)
Investment	\$70.1 million over four years.
Description	The Fare Free Sundays initiative allows Western Australians who hold a valid SmartRider card to travel for free on all Transperth services on Sundays, while the Ride to School Free Program provides free travel for eligible school students using a valid Student SmartRider card on regular Transperth services Monday to Friday during the school year.
Implications	<i>While these initiatives help with transport costs, we would like to see this extended to university and TAFE students. These initiatives are not new, but this budget makes them permanent.</i>