

# State Budget 2008/09 Information Sheet

## Essential Services

### OVERVIEW

Access to essential services such as public transport and utilities is integral to the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. In addition to being fundamental to the quality of our lives, we are dependent on an affordable and uninterrupted supply of water, energy and transport in order to maintain our inclusion in the life of the community – including employment and training.

As a result of real increases to the cost of fuel and a high local inflation rate, the cost of living in WA is rising rapidly. In the context of rapidly rising living costs, low income households can often find paying utility bills difficult. Being without energy and water, even for a short period of time, can have severe social and economic ramifications on individuals, families and communities.

WACOSS has provided a series of recommendations which focus on improving the accessibility and affordability of essential services, and better regulatory protections and financial assistance for consumers.

WACOSS' Recommendations	Budget Outcome & Comments
<p><b>State-wide Energy and Water Efficiency Retrofit Programs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A comprehensive state-wide energy and water efficiency retrofitting program for lower income households</li> <li>A no-interest loan scheme for the purchase of efficient appliances.</li> </ul>	<p><b>\$6 million in new funding for public information on energy efficiency.</b></p> <p><b>\$2.13 million of new funding (08/09) for low-income energy efficiency program</b></p>
<p><b>Utility Connection Grant Scheme</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utility Connection Grant Scheme to provide financial assistance for utility bills for those experiencing financial hardship.</li> </ul>	<p><b>\$3.96 million for a Hardship Utility Grants Scheme (HUGS).</b></p> <p><b>This amount to be split between actual grants and funding for FCs and others to administer scheme.</b></p>
<p><b>Essential Services Policy Unit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a central policy unit to monitor the affordability and accessibility of essential services in Western Australia.</li> </ul>	<p><b>No funding commitment.</b></p>
<p><b>Expand Public Transport</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand public transport in WA incl. travel within and between suburbs.</li> <li>Increasing the accessibility of train and bus services.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Commitment for \$55 million over 4 years for 15 new 3-car train carriage sets. 2 to be delivered in 08/09.</b></p> <p><b>\$52 million for 96 new buses. 80 to be delivered in 08/09.</b></p> <p><b>\$1.2 million to extend peak hour bus services.</b></p>
<p><b>Walking and Cycling</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase investment in appropriate, dedicated walking and cycling routes in the suburbs of Perth.</li> <li>Promotion of alternatives to car use.</li> </ul>	<p><b>No apparent increase to funding of PBN.</b></p> <p><b>\$25.5 million to be spent on extending dual use paths on Mitchell Fwy and new Perth-Bunbury Hwy.</b></p> <p><b>No apparent increase to funding for promotion.</b></p>