

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

4 April 2008

## **Electricity Prices Go Up – Government Responds to WACOSS’s Call to Help Battlers**

WACOSS understands that the price of electricity may still rise by up to 47% following the removal of the cap on electricity prices in 2009, phased-in over a number of years. This increase will significantly affect consumers particularly those with a low or restricted income.

WACOSS has called for increased support for those experiencing utility hardship. Central to this has been the position that improved financial counselling, a utility hardship grants scheme and an energy and water efficiency scheme will go a long way towards alleviating the financial hardship that these increases will bring to many WA families.

At the same time as rises to the cost of electricity were announced, the West Australian Government also announced increased assistance for utility consumers experiencing financial hardship. This assistance includes a commitment to increasing support for financial counselors and establishing a Hardship Utility Grant Scheme and an Energy and Water Efficiency Scheme.

WACOSS Director of Social Policy Irina Cattalini said, “The increased cost of electricity is not good news for low-income consumers. There are, however, clear indications that the government recognises the impact of these increases and has made a significant commitment to addressing the increasing hardship felt by energy and water consumers in WA”.

“While we acknowledge that electricity pricing needs to move towards reflecting the costs of provision, it is important to remember that electricity is an essential service and must remain accessible and affordable to everyone in the community”, said Irina Cattalini.

Further to the announcements made today, WACOSS also eagerly awaits the results of December’s review of Government Concessions and looks forward to further assistance for people experiencing financial hardship.

“WACOSS would like the Premier to address the issue of essential service affordability as a part of a Social Inclusion Strategy for WA, to prevent people being left behind in the boom. Such a strategy should guarantee access to basic essential services, like energy and water” Irina Cattalini said.

For further comment:  
Irina Cattalini –Director Social Policy  
0422 422 438  
9420 7222