

Household Fees, Charges and Concessions

The McGowan Government has delivered a state budget that promises to keep government fees and charges below CPI, as well as providing electricity credits for all households and a much-needed boost to the Hardship Utility Grant Scheme limits. The Budget misses the opportunity, however, to expand eligibility for certain concessions such as water charges, vehicle registration and free public transit periods to all concession card holders.

Table 8.7

ESTIMATED IMPACT ON THE 'REPRESENTATIVE' HOUSEHOLD

	2022-23 \$ level	% change	\$ change	2023-24 \$ level
Utility Charges ^(a)				
Electricity ^(b)	1,812.52	2.5	45.30	1,857.82
\$400 Household Electricity Credit ^(c)	-400.00	n/a	n/a	-400.00
Water, wastewater, and drainage ^{(d)(e)}	1,803.71	2.5	45.11	1,848.82
<i>Total</i>	3,216.23	2.8	90.41	3,306.64
Public Transport ^(f)				
Student fares ^(g)	280.00	–	–	280.00
Standard fares ^(h)	1,152.00	2.0	23.04	1,175.04
<i>Total</i>	1,432.00	1.6	23.04	1,455.04
Motor Vehicles ⁽ⁱ⁾				
Vehicle licence charge	414.92	3.9	16.00	430.92
Recording fee	10.30	–	–	10.30
Driver's licence	93.70	–	–	93.70
Motor Injury Insurance (MII)	426.10	2.3	9.76	435.86
<i>Total</i>	945.02	2.7	25.76	970.78
Emergency Services Levy (ESL) ^(a)	297.26	5.0	14.86	312.12
Stamp Duty ^(j)				
Stamp duty on general insurance ^(k)	203.50	–	–	203.50
Stamp duty on MII	42.61	–	–	42.61
<i>Total</i>	246.11	–	–	246.11
Total Expenditure	6,136.62	2.5	154.07	6,290.69
Total Expenditure (excluding electricity credits)	6,536.62	2.4	154.07	6,690.69

Initiative	Household Electricity Credit – (BP3, P7)
Investment	\$566 million (\$450 million funded by the State Government and \$116 million funded by the Commonwealth)
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Western Australian households to receive a minimum \$400 Household Electricity Credit Energy Assistance Payment (EAP) eligible households to receive a \$500 Household Electricity Credit Small businesses with annual electricity consumption of less than 50 megawatt hours to receive a \$650 credit
Implications	The electricity credits provide temporary assistance to households in the midst of the current cost of living crisis. EAP eligible households receive an additional \$100 of electricity credit to provide greater support than the rest of the population. It is unclear how the Federal contribution is factored into this.

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Initiative	Hardship Utility Grant Scheme Limit Increase – (BP3, P7)
Investment	\$3 million over the forward estimates
Description	The maximum Hardship Utility Grant Scheme limits increased from \$580 to \$640 (below the 26th parallel) and from \$960 to \$1,060 (above the 26th parallel)
Implications	The increase to the Hardship Utility Grant (HUGS) limits by 10 per cent is welcome and much needed. HUGS payment limits have remained static since 2017/18, not keeping pace with increases in energy and water costs. This will provide better support for those households experiencing difficulties with their utility bills.

Initiative	Fare Free Sunday Sessions – (BP3, P7)
Investment	\$2 million
Description	To encourage the continued use of public transport, the Government has established Fare Free Sunday Sessions - free public transport for Smart Rider users on the first Sunday of every month, commencing June 2023.
Implications	Increasing public transport patronage is critical, but it is unclear how much impact this initiative will have. WACOSS has advocated for an expansion of the eligibility for the current daily free travel periods for seniors to include all concession card holders.

Initiative	Seniors' Cost of Living Rebate Increase – (BP3, P7)
Investment	\$16 million over the forward estimates
Description	An increase to the Seniors' Cost of Living Rebate in line with the Consumer Price Index, boosting the 2023-24 rebate to \$104 for singles and \$156 for couples.
Implications	This increase ensures that the value of the Seniors' Cost of Living Rebate maintains relativity with rises in CPI.