

STATE BUDGET 2010–11 — FEE AND CHARGE INCREASES

Matter of Public Interest

26 May 2010

DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton): We have just heard a rather vigorous exchange from members opposite who feigned anger. This is an important issue. People are doing it tough in these times, particularly self-funded retirees who have been affected by Rudd's tax and whatnot.

The question is: what would members opposite do if they were in government and faced with the same issues? One does not have to go very far to find out; there is plenty of documentation. They were in government a couple of years ago. In fact, when they brought down the 2008–09 budget in early 2008, they increased water charges by 10 per cent. On what basis did they do that?

The then Premier referred to the Economic Regulation Authority's recommendation. In his explanation for that, Mr Carpenter said that he was confident that Western Australians would recognise water was a scarce commodity and understood the need to raise charges to combat climate change. I have heard those comments from members on our side. The then Premier also said that people's understanding of the scarcity of water and the importance of treating water as a scarce commodity required his government to increase the price.

The member for Victoria Park asked the Premier what the increase is going to be next year. That same question was asked of the former Premier, but Mr Carpenter refused to be drawn on the likelihood of future price rises in household charges, and said that that would be assessed annually. I am getting a bit old and I am hard of hearing, but I think I heard that comment repeatedly today. A very interesting statement was made today.

Other people, in a different life, responded to this issue. The response of the guy who at that time ran the Conservation Council of Western Australia, Chris Tallentire—I recognise that name—was that water was still far too cheap.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: Did you listen to my speech?

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes, I did. He is reported as saying —

You can get a tonne of water delivered to your home for about 80c at the moment, that's not helping anyone understand the preciousness of this resource at all, ...

Mr C.J. Tallentire interjected.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: He went on to say —

At the very least it needs to reflect the cost of delivery, the cost of production and environmental costs ... the 9.7 per cent increase is welcome because it gets us closer

—
Point of Order

Mr T.G. STEPHENS: I understand that the member is quoting the other member out of context.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: He is not a member in this case. Did the member not listen? This is before he came to Parliament.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr J.M. Francis): Before the member for Riverton continues, I remind members of the point I made earlier about wanting to hear people in silence. There are too many audible conversations going on among other members.

Debate Resumed

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I will repeat what he said. He said —

At the very least it needs to reflect the cost of delivery, the cost of production and environmental costs ... the 9.7 per cent increase is welcome because it gets us closer towards the real cost of water.

That is what we are doing. The Premier at the time said that the ERA's report warned that further price rises were needed and suggested that charges should increase by more than 50 per cent over the following period. As members know, Chris Tallentire is in this house. In his budget speech he railed against the increase. The real story is that he cannot have it both ways. He cannot have more positions on an issue than are in the *Kama Sutra*. The move on water was right, and the member approved of it.

Mr C.J. Tallentire interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I am not going to call the member for Gosnells. I remind the member for Riverton to refer to other members in this place by the name of their seat, not by their name. I remind the member that when he singles out members, he invites interjections.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Excuse me; I got confused with his past life. The issue is that we need to be consistent. We made the right move, just as members opposite did when they were in government.