

Seniors sluggish with rebate cap

EXCLUSIVE
JOE SPAGNOLO
Political Editor

ABOUT 45,000 WA seniors will be hundreds of dollars worse off next year when the Barnett Government's cap on council rates rebates for the elderly starts.

New figures show that 45,103 seniors will be affected by capping the rebate at \$550 – one of several financial hits for seniors in the State Budget.

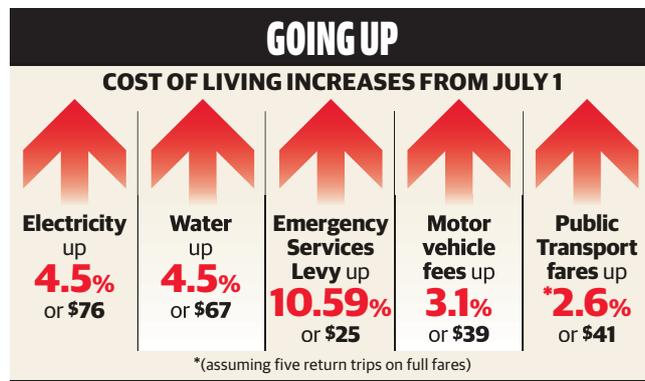
WA seniors with a pensioner card get a 50 per cent discount on their council rates. From July 1 next year, this discount will be capped at \$550.

Seniors Minister Tony Simpson conceded 26,222 pensioner card holders will be up to \$100 worse off. Another 18,800 will be up to \$500 worse off.

Mr Simpson said the worst-hit areas would be Wanneroo, Mundaring, Armadale and Mandurah.

A water rates 50 per cent subsidy for eligible pensioners will also be capped at \$600 from next July.

WA seniors will be hit this



week, when the \$200 safety and security rebate, to buy a personal safety device, is axed from Wednesday.

A Cost of Living Assistance payment, a \$227 subsidy which helps seniors pay their electricity bills, will be replaced by a means tested Energy Assistance Payment.

This will be restricted to people on a Commonwealth concession card.

The eligibility for a WA Seniors Card changes from 60 to 61 this week. It will continue to rise every two years until the eligibility age is 65 in 2023-24.

These cuts come on top of a decision last year to halve the \$164 cost of living rebate for

singles. It was cut by \$123 for couples.

Labor leader Mark McGowan said the attack on WA seniors was "mean spirited penny pinching".

Mr Simpson said capping the council concession at \$550 ensures "money is targeted at those who need it most".

"It is important to note, there are over 100,000 pensioners who are ratepayers who are not impacted by this decision," he said.

"With an ageing population, we need to ensure the concessions, rebates and support we provide seniors is responsible, fair, sustainable and targeted at those who need it most."