



22 August 2017

Chief Minister
Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
GPO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Minister

Utilities Concession Scheme – Concessions for Residents of Caravan Parks and other embedded networks in the ACT

I am writing on behalf of the ACT Energy Consumers Policy Consortium to request that the ACT Government considers modifying the Utilities Concession Scheme to provide for concessions for those residents of Caravan Parks and other embedded networks in the ACT.

It has been brought to our attention that residents in Southside Village Caravan Park have in the past received concessions on their electricity but are no longer receiving this concession due to a new provider taking over. Many of these residents have a relevant concession card or health care card but because they are residents in an embedded network situation, it appears to be that the concession is only passed on at the discretion of the provider. Southside Village previously had ActewAGL as the electricity provider, and could organise a concession for its residents through ActewAGL. Southside Village has signed up to a new provider ERM, and they are either unable or unwilling to provide a concession as the account is with Southside Village and not with the individual residents.

ACTCOSS, a member of the Consortium, received copies of correspondence on this issue from Karen Hutcheson, Southside Village. The correspondence is that sent to the Chief Minister on 9 May 2017, and 5 July 2016 by Frank Sharkey, Chief Executive Officer, Southside Village. In these letters, Mr Sharkey has attached links to Interstate Electricity Concessions/Rebates and asked that the concession is passed on as is done in other States, by allowing residents or embedded networks to directly apply to the Department which provides the concession.

I have attached a brief summary of the approaches in other States, and generally they provide that a resident in an embedded network or having an account with other than a mainstream provider can receive a concession direct from the relevant Government Department provided they provide accounts as evidence that they are directly billed for supply.

In addition to the representation from Southside Village, ACTCOSS and myself have also been directly approached by a resident of Southside Village, Kaye Saunders who has taken on the role of ACT Caravan Parks Representative, who wishes to also have the issue addressed.

She estimates that around half of the residents in Southside Village, around 70 residents, would be eligible for the rebate – note that this is higher than the number who were previously receiving it

when ActewAGL provided concessions – only around 30 residents received the concession - but it may be that many do not know they are eligible. She is also exploring whether residents of Southside Village can connect directly with ActewAGL and bypass the embedded network.

At this stage it is only Southside Village who have raised concerns about the lack of access to the concession and it is possible that there are other embedded network customers who are also missing out. In other States the use of embedded networks is growing and the issues associated with them are becoming more apparent. In addition to Caravan Parks, retirement villages, again an area where there are many concession card holders, are also affected.

I request that you urgently look at the policy around embedded networks, and take measures similar to other States to ensure that all electricity customers who meet the eligibility for concessions can access them, rather than them being penalised because of where they live.

Susan Helyar, Director, ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS)

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On behalf of the ACT Energy Consumers Policy Consortium members:

[ACT Council of Social Service \(ACTCOSS\)](#)

[Care Financial Counselling Service](#)

[Conservation Council ACT Region](#)

[SEE-Change](#)

[Small Business Taskforce of the Canberra Business Chamber](#)

Attachment: Approaches by other States

NSW

New South Wales provides the Low Income Household Rebate which helps eligible NSW households to pay their electricity bills to on-supplied residents. The rebate is \$258.50 a year (slightly more than other low income households who only receive \$235 a year). It is supplied to customers who are long term resident of an on-supplied residential community, or a resident of an on-supplied retirement village, or a resident of an on-supplied strata scheme; and whose name appears on the electricity account for supply to his or her principal place of residence. Customers are eligible if they have a Pensioner Concession Card issued by the DHS/DVA; or DHS Health Care Card*; or DVA Gold Card marked with either: War Widow or War Widower Pension; or Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI); or Disability Pension (EDA). On-Supplied Families in receipt of Family Tax Benefit can also receive a rebate, either a partial (\$16.50) or full (\$165) payment made directly into your nominated bank account. The partial payment is made if also eligible for the Low Income Household Rebate.

If approved for a rebate an on-supplied customer has the rebate paid by the Department of Industry as a direct deposit into their bank account once a year.

Queensland

Electricity and gas rebates are provided to Queensland pensioners and seniors who have a Pensioner Concession Card, Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card (and receive the War Widow/er Pension or special rate TPI Pension), Queensland Seniors Card, or Commonwealth Health Care Card (Electricity Rebate only) and those with Asylum seeker status (residents will need to provide their ImmiCard details) (Electricity Rebate only). The rebates are Electricity Rebate—\$340.85 per year (GST inclusive) and the Reticulated Natural Gas Rebate—\$71.30 per year (GST inclusive).

Residents of caravan parks or multi-unit residential building (e.g. apartment) must also show that your electricity or reticulated natural gas is paid on the basis of metered consumption.

South Australia

The Residential Parks Concession Scheme commenced 1 July 2009 and provides a single, combined payment for State Government concessions to help people who live in a residential park or caravan park with their household (utility) expenses. These may be for energy (electricity and gas), water and sewerage charges. The Residential Parks Concession is paid quarterly (every three months) in a combined payment, to assist you with your park fees and charges. If you receive a bill from an electricity retailer you will not see an energy concession on it, as your energy concession is included in your Residential Parks Concession combined payment. Eligibility under the scheme depends on your individual circumstances. You may be eligible if you: • receive a pension or particular benefit from Centrelink or the Department of Veterans' Affairs; • hold a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card or • hold a Commonwealth Low Income Health Care Card The amount of the concession you may receive depends on your eligibility, your living arrangements and what services you are charged for by your park operator. From 1 July 2017 the Residential Parks Concession will be indexed each financial year. Here are examples of the most common entitlements from 1 July 2017:

- Eligible residents who own their own dwelling may receive a combined concession of up to \$516.90 per year paid quarterly; Eligible tenants may receive a combined concession of up to \$339.50 per year paid quarterly.

Victoria

Non-Mains Energy Concession

Victoria has a specific Non-Mains Energy Concession to assist cardholders who rely on liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), firewood or heating oil for domestic heating, cooking or hot water, or who access non-mains electricity via an embedded network, or who rely on a generator. Special conditions apply for the firewood concession.

Account holders who hold one of the following eligible concession cards can apply: Pensioner Concession Card, Health Care Card, Veterans' Affairs Gold Card.

All non-mains energy costs are covered from 1 January to 31 December each year. The amount of the rebate depends on the annual amount of each non-mains energy source purchased.

The rebate amount for 2017 on each utility is as follows:

- \$48 for spending from \$100 to \$274.99
- \$144 for spending from \$275 to \$825.99
- \$241 for spending from \$826 to \$1374.99
- \$343 for spending from \$1375 to \$1961.99
- \$439 for spending from \$1962 to \$2509.99
- \$534 for spending \$2510 or more.

Applications are made to the Department of Health and Human Services and for each year close on 30 June of the following year. Applications must include copies of paid invoices or receipts.

Western Australia

Energy Assistance Payment (EAP)

The Energy Assistance payment of \$300 inclusive of GST is divided into daily amounts and credited to [Synergy](#) or [Horizon Power](#) customers' electricity bills. If you are not a direct customer of these energy suppliers check your eligibility for the [Energy Concession Extension Scheme](#) which provides a payment to people holding concessions cards who do not have electricity accounts with Synergy or Horizon Power but who pay for their electricity use through on-selling arrangements or to retailers such as Perth Energy or Alinta Sales. The payment includes the Energy Assistance Payment and may be more if you also meet the eligibility requirements for the Dependent Child Rebate and/or the Air Conditioning Rebate.

Application is through the [Department for Finance website](#) .