NT Pensioners and carers to get utility bill refunds

All members of the Northern Territory Pensioner and Carer Concession Scheme (NTPCCS) will receive proportional refunds on their last power, water and sewerage accounts, following a miscalculation of the discount on the increased charges that became effective from 1 July 2009.

The Minister for Senior Territorians Gerry McCarthy, said: “This means making a refund payment of around 6 cents per day to all NTPCCS power, water and sewerage consumers, and 13 cents per day to those paying sewerage bills.

“The amount of the refund will depend on their billing date between 1 July and 30 September 2009. If the refund is under $10, it will appear as a credit on their next bill. If it is over $10 up to an expected maximum of around $17.10, cardholders will be offered a choice of a credit on their next bill or a cheque refund.

“This means no NTPCCS member would be worse off under the increased charges.

“I want to apologise to all NTPCCS members. An error was made in estimating daily use of these services and this carried through to the formula aimed at boosting subsidies in order to offset the increased tariffs.

“A review has shown that the subsidy for NTPCCS cardholders needs to be further increased and a new formula will be applied to all bills from 1 October 2009, back-dated to 1 July 2009. The forthcoming refund cheques are a part of this process.”

Mr McCarthy added that the 50 per cent maximum cap on power accounts has also been removed and this will mean that some consumers are better off.

“The NTPCCS remains the most generous utility discount scheme of its kind in Australia but this error is regrettable, especially as a number of NTPCCS members have tight household budgets.

“I would like to thank individual NTPCCS members and the Council on the Ageing NT for bringing the issue to the attention of my office and the Department.

“I assure all consumers that the proper formula will be applied to all bills from 1 October 2009 and will be backdated to 1 July 2009. This will ensure that eligible members of the NTPCCS receive the full concessions and are not financially disadvantaged.”

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