



Greg Piper MP

Member for Lake Macquarie



MEDIA RELEASE

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PENSIONERS STILL DROWNING IN HUNTER WATER RIPOFF

Member for Lake Macquarie, Greg Piper, is concerned that the weekend announcement of a \$63 increase in rebate for water and sewerage charges for pensioners in the Hunter does not go far enough.

Mr Piper wrote to Phillip Costa, Minister for Water, earlier this year requesting an explanation for the substantial variation between Sydney and Hunter pensioner rebates.

"The Minister is supporting the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's proposal for a \$63 increase over four years, a mere \$16 a year extra rebate which leaves our pensioners way behind in terms of equity."

"It increases the Hunter rebate to \$199 next financial year, but still sees Hunter Water customers paying \$87 a year more for their water and sewage connections than their Sydney counterparts."

"But if that's inequitable, spare a thought for the thousands of pensioners living in Hunter retirement villages who get no rebate at all," Mr Piper added.

Mr Piper has been following up a problem in which pensioners living in retirement villages with no separate water meters receive no rebate at all, although they pay full sewer connection and water usage fees through a village levy.

"Following my inquiry to Treasury last September, I have just received a letter from Minister Costa sympathising with the pensioners' plight but referring the matter back to Hunter Water through the Department of Water and Energy."

According to Mr Piper, the issue has been going around in circles for many years with lack of individual metering used as the excuse, even though it is the un-metered sewer connection fee which represents the biggest charge.

"I proposed a simple accounting solution to address the problem, but Hunter Water and its State Government share holders continue to treat our region's pensioners with indifference," Mr Piper said.

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