



Increasing the water and sewerage concession cap

The 2009-10 Budget provides \$12.49 million in 2009-10 (\$44.41 million over four years) to assist low income Victorians cope with rising water prices. The combination of drought and climate change, and the subsequent need to expand the State's water infrastructure will increase the cost of water from 1 July 2009.

Of this funding, \$10.1 million in 2009-10 will enable the water and sewerage concession cap to increase to \$216.60 from the current level of \$189.70. This is an increase of 14.18 per cent, which is above the anticipated state-wide price increase.

A further \$2.39 million will be invested in the Water Wise program to provide a further 4,000 audits and retrofits to assist low income and vulnerable water customers reduce their water consumption and therefore their water bills. Water savings of approximately 20 per cent have been achieved through similar programs.

While assistance provided through utility bills discounts for registered concession card holders provides relief for many, approximately 1,000 households a year are unable to pay their water bills and need additional financial assistance to maintain unrestricted access to water. The Utility Relief Grant Scheme is available to meet the needs of these and other utility customers who are experiencing a financial crisis and are unable to pay their outstanding electricity, gas (including bottled gas) or water account.

Through this assistance package the 2009-10 State Budget provides an integrated response to reducing the impact of water price rises on low income Victorians by increasing the water and sewerage concession cap, funding water consumption reduction initiatives for concession card holders, and by ensuring that people experiencing hardship are assisted to maintain their access to essential water supplies.