

Dear Economic Regulator,

I first came to Australia in 1982 and, coming from California, I was amazed at the high quality of living Aussies enjoyed. In particular, there were no homeless people living in the streets and parks! A friend of mine bought a house for \$60,000 on her own for the first time I started thinking I could buy a home of my own. I discovered why Australia was known as the 'lucky country'. Whether you were a surf bum or a wealthy entrepreneur, you could afford a nice home and an enviable lifestyle. But over the years, I have noticed the changes and they are heartbreaking. Most poignant of all, it is commonplace now to see people living in the streets. :(

Tasmania has always been my favourite place in Australia, and I dreamed of living there. Finally, In June this year, I moved from Melbourne to Deloraine after purchasing a vacant block with a shed and a water tank. I receive a pension and live an austere lifestyle in my self-contained camper van on the property. Needless to say, I am careful about how I spend my income.

Not long afterward, I was shocked to receive an invoice from TasWater for water and sewerage charges, even though I have no such services connected. I contacted them and they advised that according to legislation I have to pay charges for unconnected services. I've poured over the rationale involved. Still, it seems incredibly unfair and to be honest a little crazy to me. Not only that, TasWater is the only service provider that charges for unconnected services. To add insult to injury, they give a tiny concession discount but only for connected services.

As a comparison, Aurora Energy gives a generous concession discount. I only pay for the electricity I use spread over peak and off peak times. I just got my first quarterly electricity bill, and I only have to pay just under \$25! Sure, the fact that I don't have a home and my small motor home uses minimal electricity contribute to my efficient energy use. So you can imagine what a financial hardship paying \$59 per month for nothing places on my pension income!

Even the average electricity costs for a one-person household works out to be about the same as unconnected TasWater services. Not only that, TasWater applies different rules for water and sewerage. With regard to the water service charge, the same price is levied for both a connected and non-connected water service. The discounted charge applies only for a non-connected sewerage service.

I would like to see the legislation changed regarding this matter to give people struggling to attain the 'Australian Dream' a fair go. To be honest, it's beginning to look like a nightmare. At least Tasmania seems to be the only state in Australia where people on lower incomes can still afford to buy a home.

To be fair and reasonable, TasWater needs to substantially reduce or preferably eliminate their charges for unconnected services, in line with other service providers. At the very least, they should provide a more generous concession for struggling pensioners and perhaps even first home buyers and those on lower incomes.

I appreciate your help in this matter.

Sincerely,

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