

## Question on Notice

No. 1602

Asked on Thursday, 30 October 2008

**MRS ATTWOOD** asked the Minister for Communities, Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Seniors and Youth (**MS NELSON-CARR**)—

Will she outline the various types of support available to pensioners in South East Queensland and provide further details about the timing of the South East Queensland water subsidy scheme?

### **ANSWER:**

The provision of concessions to pensioners, seniors and veterans is a major commitment for the Queensland Government. The range of concessions includes local government rates, ambulance, public transport (local bus and ferry travel as well as suburban and long-distance rail travel), motor vehicle and boat registration, electricity, reticulated natural gas, electricity life support, fishing permits and health services, such as dental, spectacles supply and medical aids.

The Department of Communities currently provides a range of concessions to over 700,000 eligible pensioners, seniors and veterans throughout Queensland on essential services, with a total budget for 2008-09 of \$186.7 million.

This includes the:

- Pensioner Rate Subsidy Scheme
- Electricity Rebate Scheme
- Electricity Life Support Concession Scheme
- Rail Concessions Scheme
- Reticulated Natural Gas Rebate Scheme
- Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme.

In addition, to address the impact of increased water prices on eligible pensioners in the South East Queensland Water Grid, the Queensland Government also announced in the 2008-09 Budget the Pensioner Water Subsidy Scheme that provides a rebate of \$40 in 2008-09, rising to \$70 in 2009-10 to a maximum of \$100 in 2010-11 and subsequent years. This subsidy is in addition to the current Pensioner Rate Subsidy Scheme which includes a water charge component.

Initial discussions on the implementation of the new subsidy commenced with the relevant south-east Queensland councils in early June 2008. At this time it was identified by councils that delivery of the subsidy would be delayed pending modifications to their existing billing systems to incorporate the new subsidy.

A number of councils have already delivered the subsidy to eligible pensioners and seniors. It is expected that required modifications to billing systems will be completed shortly and the remaining councils will be able to deliver the rebate to eligible ratepayers, including any backdated component, on their third quarter (January to March 2009) rates notice.

There are approximately 162,000 eligible pensioner households within south east Queensland currently accessing the Pensioner Rate Subsidy Scheme, who would be eligible for the SEQ Water Subsidy.

The Department of Communities also operates the Seniors Card and Seniors Business Discount Card Schemes which deliver savings to Queenslanders aged 60 years and older.

Further details regarding these schemes may be found at:

[www.communities.qld.gov.au/community/concessions/](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/community/concessions/)