

Question on Notice

No. 640

Asked on 13 April 2010

MS O'NEILL asked the Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women (MS STRUTHERS)—

QUESTION

Will the Minister advise how constituents in the Kallangur Electorate are helped by the Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme?

ANSWER

The Queensland Government provides around \$190 million in funding to deliver over one million concession services to eligible pensioners, seniors and veterans on a range of concessions, including electricity, electricity life support, reticulated natural gas, local government rates, water, and local and long-distance rail travel within Queensland. This funding is administered by the Department of Communities.

The Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme was launched in November 2007 to assist households who have experienced a short-term financial crisis or unforeseen emergency within the past 12 months, limiting a household's ability to pay electricity and/or reticulated natural gas bills.

Since commencement of the Scheme to the end of March 2010, financial assistance has been provided to 3,721 Queensland households, with grants totalling nearly \$1.5 million. The number of applications approved under the Scheme during the period March 2009 to March 2010 has increased from 116 to 418 per month—a rise of over 260%.

Specifically in the Kallangur Electorate, financial assistance under the Scheme totalling over \$22,000 has been provided to 48 households.

A consumer may receive assistance through the Scheme once in a 12 month period and assistance may only be provided for two consecutive years. The Scheme provides a grant off the consumer's outstanding energy account ranging from a minimum of \$100 up to a maximum cap of \$720 per application.

To be eligible to receive this assistance, the consumer must:

- hold a current concession card in the name shown on the electricity and/or gas bill; or
- be part of their energy retailer's hardship program or payment plan; or
- have an income equal to or less than the Commonwealth income rate for part age pensioners (currently per fortnight \$1,544.20 for singles and \$2,362.00 for couples).

Comprehensive details about the Scheme, in addition to advice on the full array of concessions offered by the government, is available through the department's *Concessions Made Easy* brochure, its website at www.communities.qld.gov.au and through a concession information line—13 13 04.

To apply for assistance, energy consumers experiencing difficulties should contact their energy retailer in the first instance.