

# Big business profiting from paper fees

CONSUMER advocacy campaigners Keep Me Posted Australia claim banks, utility providers and telcos are profiteering from charges they slap on customers who request paper statements.

From February next year the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA) will start slugging its customers with a \$2.50 fee to provide extra printed copies of their account statement.

Energy Australia is the latest Australian company to follow suit, hitting its customers with an extra \$1.69 per bill if they opt to receive paper statements in the mail starting in November.

Other companies such as Telstra, Optus, and Origin Energy have already started charging customers a similar fee for paper statements.

Keep Me Posted says analysis of the market has found it costs between 88 cents and \$1.02 to send a paper bill, however Australian companies are charging customers anywhere from \$1.69 to \$3.20 to receive paper statement.

Executive director of Keep Me Posted Australia



*Profiteers: Northwood*

Kellie Northwood comments, “These findings suggest that businesses are profiteering from customers who wish to receive their statements on paper and further demonstrates the irresponsibility of these companies.”

In response to the claims, a CBA spokesperson told Australian Printer, “From February 2017 customers who have opted in to receive paper statements, will continue to receive two paper statements per year free of charge, with business customers receiving four per year.

“We understand it is important for our customers to

have access to their statements and we have made them available in a number of ways including in paper or online. Customers can access their statements online at any time for free, with statements archived for up to seven years.”

However Northwood says companies are ignoring the costs associated with digital communications. A study by Danish company Natur-Energi has found it costs on average \$3.51 per customer to get paid via paper invoice compared to \$6.21 per customer billed by email.

“Often these decisions made by companies are procurement cuts and not considered holistically, across community, customer service or back-end costs to process,” Northwood says.

Northwood has also dismissed companies’ claims that rising print and postage costs are to blame for the additional charges. She says, “The claims that print and postage costs have dramatically increased is fallacious, print costs have declined year on year since 2009.