



As companies push to digital Tasmanians are hit with unfair billing practices: community forum in Devonport with Senator Urquhart

Media Embargo until Friday 16th September 9 am.

With Banks, Telcos and other service providers increasing pressure on their customers to bills and statements, many Tasmanians are left footing the bill. Studies show it is the most vulnerable who are impacted the most with 57% of households earning less than \$40,000 not having access to the internet and only 51% of Australians over 65 being internet users, a new campaign, Keep Me Posted, is challenging corporations to remove 'pay-to-pay' penalties for consumer's who prefer paper communications.

Tasmania one of the most affected States by the digital divide. The Australian Digital Inclusion Index released in August reveals that Tasmania is the least digitally included State of Australia. With a score of 48.2, it is 6.3 points below the national average.

This isn't recent for Tasmania, as the State has held the lowest score over the last three years and further throughout this time the digital inclusion in the State has decreased.

Senator Urquhart will host a community forum **Monday 19th September in Devonport** to discuss the local impact of the push to digital and unfair billing practices. Guest speakers will include Justine Keay, newly elected Federal Member for Braddon, and Kellie Northwood, Executive Director of the Keep Me Posted campaign.

Senator Urquhart outlined she is "particularly concerned about the widespread 'pay-to-pay' practice of charging customers more to receive their bills by mail, rather than electronically. We know that these fees are disproportionately hitting those who can least afford it, and Tasmanians are hardest hit than other States across Australia which is even more disturbing."

Representatives from the community, charities, seniors groups, post offices and other stakeholders have been invited to discuss how these practices are affecting the community and what needs to be done.

"The practice of charging a fee for paper bills is excluding many in our community that don't use, or don't have access to the Internet in their homes. I don't think it's right for our elderly community members, or vulnerable Australians to be charged with extra fees that can easily stretch to hundreds of dollars a year," commented Justine Keay, Federal Member for Braddon.

The forum is an open invitation to all members of the community providing an opportunity to hear about the impact of these fees and advice on how Tasmanians can ask for these fees to be removed.

"It is critical to raise awareness about the Keep Me Posted campaign," commented Kellie Northwood, "We want to hear the impacts on the community and understand how we can assist people with these concerns. Our commitment to all Australians is to bring your voice to those who can implement change for our communities."

Keep Me Posted:

PO Box 5231, Burnley, VIC, 3121

ABN: 83 161 552 192 T: 03 9421 2209 W: keepmeposted.org.au



Details:

WHERE: Devonport Bowls and Croquet Club, North Fenton Street, Devonport
WHEN: Monday 19 September - 11am
RSVP: Call 6423 1933 or email Senator.Urquhart@aph.gov.au

Tea, coffee and light refreshments will be provided.

- ENDS -

Further information and Media enquiries:

Senator Urquhart's Office: 6423 1933 or email Senator.Urquhart@aph.gov.au

Keep Me Posted: Carole Sarasa – 0416 942 559 carole@twosides.org.au

The Keep Me Posted (KMP) campaign represents advocate groups, charities, consumer groups, employer and employee representatives, industry and political representatives who believe in the right to choose the way companies communicate with them. KMP believe every consumer should be able to choose, without penalty, how they prefer to be communicated to via banks, utility companies and other services providers. www.keepmeposted.org.au

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