

Senator slams paper bill charging

LABOR Senator and now former Opposition Spokesman for Consumer Affairs Sam Dastyari has come out swinging against the now common practice of banks, telcos and utilities charging their customers to receive a printed bill.

Writing in the Murdoch press, and appearing on popular TV shows such as Channel Ten's The Project, Dastyari has vented his anger at the corporations slugging their customers with a fee to receive their bill in print.

Dastyari's beef is the fact that many of the people who are receiving paper bills do so because they do not have online access – including many of the elderly, and the vulnerable, who are least able to afford.

He says there are 1.3 million Australian households with no internet, and says that of the majority of households in the lower income bracket, those that are earning less than \$40,000 a year, some 60 per cent do not have the internet.



Dastyari: no fees for printed bills

Writing in the Herald Sun Dastyari says, "I don't know how paper billing has suddenly become a cost of business to be dumped on the consumer? Are we to accept that utility providers and financial institutions are suddenly providing a luxury service by posting customers a letter in the mail?"

He goes on to call for change, saying the major corporations should be free to offer online billing, but that there should be no charge for receiving a printed bill. He says, "While it may only appear to be a few dollars here and there – all these fees add up. I'd rather that Australia's pensioners be able to afford a cup of coffee with their neighbours once a week than that they spend what little disposable income they have making bank profits even fatter."

Dastyari's forthright entry into the debate will be welcomed by the printing industry and by lobby group Two Sides, which has been campaigning strongly for an end to fees for receiving printed bills. The corporations initially marketed the charging of paper bills under a deceptive pseudo-environmental guise. They now routinely charge more than \$2 to those customers who receive a paper bill, in a rort that is netting them millions of dollars in extra revenue.