



## The consumer's right to choose in the hands of Tasmanian Local Councils

*For immediate release.*

**On Friday November 4<sup>th</sup>, the Local Councils of Tasmania will discuss a motion of support to Keep Me Posted, the consumer campaign advocating the consumer's right to choose how their service providers communicate with them, free of charge.**

Last Monday, the Devonport City Council carried a motion of support to the campaign and a similar motion will be discussed at the next general meeting of the Local Government Association of Tasmania. The motion asks the Councils to "endorse the activities of the Keep Me Posted Campaign, which is raising awareness about the tendency of large corporates charging people who still wish to receive a paper version of information or bills."

"We are fingers and toes crossed for the Local Government Association of Tasmania to pass the motion," commented Kellie Northwood, Executive Director of the campaign, "Following Devonport's example, we hope that Tasmania becomes the first state to promote the consumer's right to choose, leading the rest of Australia."

With Banks, Telcos and other service providers increasing pressure on their customers to switch to electronic bills and statements by charging a fee for paper communications, 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.

Tasmania is one of the most affected States by the digital divide. The Australian Digital Inclusion Index released in August 2016 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.

Keep Me Posted calls on corporations' social responsibility and asks them to remove 'pay-to-pay' penalties for consumers. The campaign is lobbying for consumers to not be charged any fees for bills or statements whether issued on paper or digitally.

"We have written to all the Local Councils of Tasmania to give them insights on the campaign and invite them to discuss with us prior to the vote," commented Northwood, "We also invite our Tasmanian supporters to write to their local representatives. It's important that Tasmanians let their Mayors and local government representatives know how they feel about fees for bills and statements and how those affect them and their relatives."

Last September, a Public Forum organised in Devonport and hosted by Senator Urquhart gathered fifty (50) residents, representatives of charities and political representatives to discuss the impact of the digital divide and unfair fee practices. On Friday, all at once, the Local Councils of Tasmania will have an opportunity to stand for their residents' right to choose.

**- ENDS -**



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**Keep Me Posted:**

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](http://www.keepmeposted.org.au)

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