



Big win for consumers' rights in Tasmania: Local Councils stand for the consumer's right to choose

For immediate release.

The Local Councils of Tasmania passed a motion 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.” The motion was carried at the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) General Meeting on 4th November.

"This is a momentous win for Tasmanian consumers' rights," commented Kellie Northwood, Executive Director of the campaign, "We congratulate Tasmania for being the first state to promote unilaterally the consumer's right to choose, leading the rest of Australia."

The LGAT support is the most recent demonstration of Tasmania's swift rallying to the campaign. It first started in September in Devonport, when Senator Urquhart hosted a Public Forum to discuss the local impact of the digital divide and the unfairness of billing practices. Devonport Mayor Steve Martin, who attended the Forum, successfully put a motion to his Council, not only to support Campaign, but to also take the issue to the LGAT, which is representative of the whole 29 Tasmanian Councils. Mayor Martin was successful in moving the motion for LGAT to come on board with the campaign, resulting in state-wide support.

Calling for support, Senator Urquhart has urged councils to take a stand against pay-to-pay billing practices. "This increasingly widespread practice might soon add hundreds of dollars to already stretched budgets for the most vulnerable Tasmanian households," Senator Urquhart said, "In Telstra's recent Digital Inclusion Index, Tasmania had the worst outcomes on all three measures – access, affordability and digital ability. On the wrong side of the digital divide are people on low incomes and those managing disabilities, relying on government income support, or living in remote communities with substandard broadband access."

At the same time the motion was discussed, a report released by the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) and the South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS) showed yet again that low-income Australians struggle in staying connected for financial reasons.

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.

"The digital divide is a harsh reality for millions of Australians. It is critical that political representatives at every level keep standing for consumer rights to protect the most vulnerable and we welcome and thank the Mayors and Councilors of Tasmania for representing their communities well," furthered Northwood.

Nationally, the Keep Me Posted campaign has the support of Senators and Members of the House from across the political spectrum; in Victoria, the campaign has the support of three local councils, Hume, Monash and Maribyrnong.

Keep Me Posted:

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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

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