

# Keep Me Posted: Two years

**L**AST month, Keep Me Posted celebrated two years since the launch of the campaign in the courtyard of Parliament House in Canberra. The campaign brought the issue of paper fees to the highest level of Government while assisting thousands of Australians across the country, and joining a coalition of mail houses, paper merchants, printers, trade unions, charities, and everyday Australians.

Kellie Northwood, executive director, Keep Me Posted, says, "As Keep Me Posted enters its third year and we reflect on our journey, we are proud to say that the campaign is delivering tangible results in assisting the community and the industry, as well as igniting the legislative process that might see the end of paper fees. Of course, we would have liked to see more companies and service providers on board, nonetheless, EnergyAustralia's decision to scrap the fees earlier this year is a great win for consumers. It is certainly showing great leadership."

Keep Me Posted has delivered with results speaking for themselves. At a political level, the campaign successfully engaged at every tier of Government, and put the issue of paper fees on the Federal legislative agenda:

- Treasury's National Consultation into paper billing fees initiated by the Federal and State Ministers for Consumer Affairs;
- motions of support and private members bill introduced in the Federal Parliament;
- New South Wales Government banned paper fees on energy bills for all their residents; and
- local Governments in Victoria and Tasmania have officially pledged their support to Keep Me Posted.

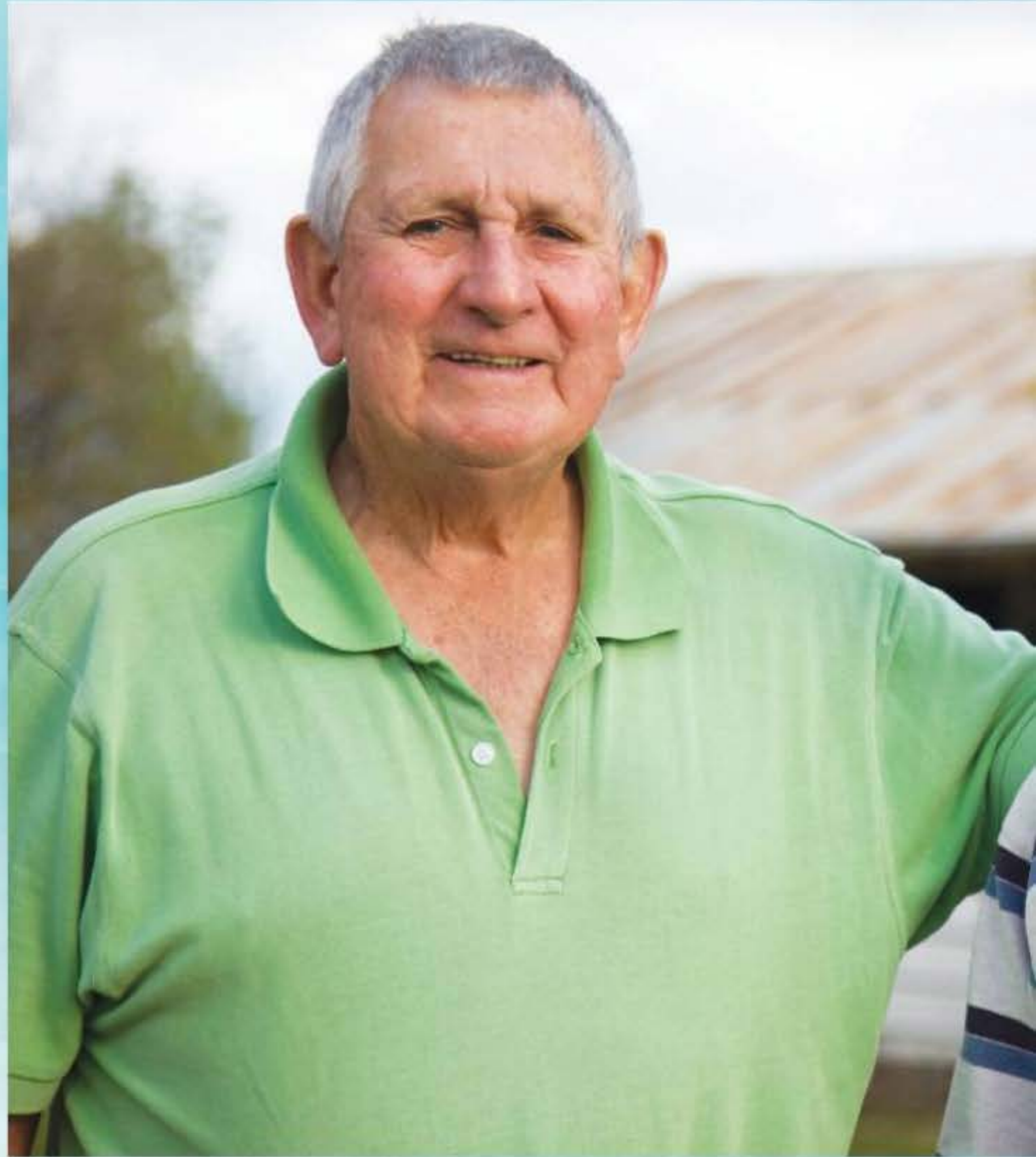
"All the way along, we have always maintained a bipartisan approach," explains Northwood. "Paper fees is not a polarising issue, anyone can be impacted, and we were always able to engage with every side of the political spectrum."

"This allowed Keep Me Posted to gain support across Federal and State Ministers regardless of their respective political allegiances."

Lobbying is just one aspect of the campaign and a strong focus was put on assisting the community. Public forums were organised across the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland with hundreds of attendees in total. Thousands of households across Australia received Keep Me Posted's template letter to help them obtain exemptions of paper fees.

A massive coup of the campaign was to get all the supporting partners aligned to distribute 800,000 flyers throughout all the Australia Post outlets of the country.

A tremendous amount of work has resulted in some remarkable results for the industry campaign group in the two years it has been in existence



*For certain demographics including the elderly, paper bills are essential*

"It was quite something to be able to walk in any Post Office of the country and find our very own flyer," says Northwood. "The immediate response from the community was overwhelming, with thousands of reply-paid postcards returned to the campaign's office week after week."

More than ten months after the beginning of the distribution, returned

postcards are still piling up at the campaign's office showing that the support continues to grow.

As the latest ABS data shows that the digital divide persists, as trust in all things digital is plummeting, and as email scams skyrocket, consumer protection against unfair penalties on paper communications seems more urgent than ever.



*800,000 flyers distributed across Australia Post outlets, massive response*

# fighting against unfair fees



"When we started the campaign, some commentators suggested that with the rapid adoption of digital technologies, the fight against paper fees was pointless," adds Northwood. "Two years in, we can see that for many Australians it is actually getting more difficult by the day to have to deal with digital communications or to have to pay their way out of them."

While Treasury is processing the many contributions to its National Consultation into paper billing fees. Keep Me Posted keeps engaging with Local and State Governments and with service providers and banks.

"We are currently fighting one fee at a time and are looking forward to seeing the end of paper fees altogether," concludes Northwood.

#### Keep Me Posted:

Keep Me Posted AU (KMP) is a national advocacy campaign run by TSA limited, a not-for-profit industry organisation, and is a partnership of advocate groups, charities, consumer groups, employer and employee representatives of the paper, print and mail industry, and local and federal representatives. KMP believes every consumer should be able to choose, without penalty, how they prefer to be communicated to via banks, utility companies and other services providers.

## KMP Key actions and achievements

### Commonwealth Treasury's National Consultation

- August 2017: Issues of paper billing fees on the agenda of the Consumer Affairs Forum of Federal and State Ministers for Consumer Affairs.
- November - December 2017: Treasury's National Consultation into paper billing fees.

### Political engagement

- Official support of 34 City Councils across two states: five in Victoria and 29 in Tasmania.
- At the end of May, a motion asking the Government to bring consumer protection against fees on paper communications was moved in the lower House by Tim Hammond MP, Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs and the motion then passed the Senate with a clear majority. On June 19, Andrew Wilkie MP tabled a Private Member's Bill to amend the Australian Consumer Law.
- September 2017: NSW announced a state-wide ban on paper fees on energy bills.

### Submissions

- December 2016: Australian Consumer Law Review
- January 2017: Productivity Commission's report on Consumer Law Enforcement and Administration
- March 2017: Senate Inquiry on Consumer protection within the banking, insurance and financial sector
- May 2018: Royal Commission into Banking, Insurance and Financial Services

### Community engagement

- Seven Public Forums organised across ACT, Tasmania, Victoria and Queensland, with of a total attendance of more than 400.
- From July 2017: 800,000 Keep Me Posted DL Brochures are distributed across all the Post Offices of Australia, taking the campaign into the retail arena. More than 6,900 Reply-paid postcards were returned to the KMP office from consumers pledging their support to the campaign.

### Media coverage

- Since the launch in April 2016, KMP has been mentioned 266 times over different outlets including TV, radio, online and print media.

### Anti-fee campaign / Best practice certificate

- KMP wrote to more than 90 companies across Australia to urge them to sign up to the KMP Pledge.
- January 2018: EnergyAustralia announced a national ban on paper billing fees.



Consumers should have the choice to receive paper or not without a financial penalty