

Attn: Chief of Staff; News Editor; News Producer

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Media Release

FIRST MAIL-OUT OF SOUTHERN WATER ACCOUNTS TO BEGIN SHORTLY

The mail-out of the first accounts to Southern Water's 90,000 customers across southern Tasmania is due to begin on 31 August. The mail-out will occur progressively over the next 2-3 weeks starting with customers in the Sorell and Central Highlands municipalities.

The mail-out of accounts is a major milestone for the three new corporations set up under the State Government's water and wastewater reform process.

Southern Water CEO, Mr Danny Sutton, was on-site in Richmond today to observe the reading of about 500 water meters in the township, the first readings of residential water meters to be undertaken by the new corporation since it was formed on 1 July.

Mr Sutton said preparing for the accounts mail-out had been a major logistical exercise involving the compilation of data from 12 different councils across the region.

He said the accounts process had to address the different methods used across the 12 council areas.

"To ensure fairness and consistency for customers, the 2009/2010 accounts in each municipal area will be calculated using the same basis as that used by individual councils in the past," Mr Sutton said. "That means some customers will receive accounts calculated according to the value of the property, while for other metered properties it will be a combination of fixed and variable charges."

Mr Sutton said each bill would be accompanied by an information leaflet to help customers understand their first account. In the first year the accounts will be sent to the property owner. The bills will not have a GST charge – water and wastewater are classified as essential services and as such are exempt from the goods and services tax. It is also pleasing to note that eligible customers will receive a remission of \$130 on their bills following the recent State Government's decision to fund the full cost of water and waste water concessions.

Mr Sutton said an increase of up to 10 per cent in water and sewerage charges had been approved by the State Government's Economic Regulator in order to improve the standard of water and wastewater services across the state.

"This increase appears to be less than national movements in water prices which are forecast to double in capital cities over the next five years."

“State-wide we need to invest about \$1 billion in capital projects over the next decade to ensure that Tasmania’s vital water infrastructure keeps pace with growth and development and meets community expectations. It is worth noting that interstate, water utilities with more than 100,000 connected properties have increased their capital investment substantially from a total of \$488 million in 2001/02 to almost \$2 billion in 2006/07.”

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