

WATER ACCOUNTS — CUSTOMER PAYMENT DIFFICULTIES

6313. Mr M.P. Murray to the Minister for Water

My question is in relation to the utility account holders of WaterCorp and I ask,

- (a) how many Water Corporation customers are currently in default of payments on their water usage accounts;
- (b) since the Liberal–National Government gained office has there been an increase from historical numbers when compared to the three years prior to forming government of customers defaulting on these accounts; and
 - (i) if yes to (b) what is the number of increases; and
 - (ii) what does the increase equate to in dollar terms;
- (c) how many customers have accessed the Hardship Utility Grants Scheme (HUGS) to pay their water usage accounts; and
- (d) apart from the HUGS program, does the Government have any other strategic plans to assist people that continue to struggle to meet their utility payments?

Mr W.R. MARMION replied:

- (a) As at 30 September 2011, 80 871 overdue accounts.
- (b) The average number of properties in default has increased from 6.2% to 6.9% of properties serviced. The average default amount per property serviced has increased by approximately \$6.
- (c) From April 2009 to 30 September 2011, 539 customers received a Hardship Utility Grants Scheme (HUGS) grant for their water accounts.
- (d) The Water Corporation offers flexible reduced interest and interest exempt payment arrangements that reflect the customer's personal circumstances and ability to pay. In addition, the Corporation also offers its Water Assist Scheme for customers in extreme long-term financial hardship whereby the Corporation will match a customer's payments dollar for dollar.