

RATES AND CHARGES (REBATES AND DEFERMENTS) AMENDMENT BILL 2013

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by **Dr M.D. Nahan (Minister for Finance)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the minister.

Second Reading

DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton — Minister for Finance) [12.14 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill seeks to make amendments to the Rates and Charges (Rebates and Deferments) Act 1992 to accommodate changes being made to the Water Corporation's billing practices. This act provides for the administration of the pensioners and seniors rebate scheme and for concessions on certain charges, including water service charges. Currently, the Water Corporation's annual service charges are issued in July for the year in advance. Water use accounts are issued in arrears, with meters read twice a year in the Perth metropolitan area and three times a year outside the metropolitan area. From 1 July 2013, the Water Corporation will commence a new billing regime that will result in combined service charge and water use accounts being issued approximately every two months. This will reduce pressure on Water Corporation customers by smoothing the accounts for households and reduce confusion between overlapping water use and service charges.

The Rates and Charges (Rebates and Deferments) Act is currently structured around administrative authorities, including the Water Corporation, issuing annual bills for the year in advance. The proposed amendments are necessary to ensure that eligible pensioners and seniors will receive rebates in respect of their Water Corporation charges that reflect the Water Corporation's new billing practices. This includes enabling an eligible person who purchases a house to register at any time during a rating year and then prospectively receive a rebate rather than have to wait until the commencement of the next rating year to become eligible.

A comprehensive explanation of the amendments is contained in the explanatory memorandum associated with this bill. I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr M. McGowan (Leader of the Opposition)**.