

WATER CORPORATION — HARDSHIP MEASURES

5148. Mr P.A. Katsambanis to the Minister for Water:

I refer the Minister to Water Corporation, and ask:

- (a) For each month of 2017 how many overdue notices were issued by Water Corporation to households in Western Australia;
- (b) For each month of 2018 how many overdue notices were issued by Water Corporation to households in Western Australia;
- (c) For each month of 2019 how many overdue notices were issued by Water Corporation to households in Western Australia;
- (d) For each month of 2017 how many households in Western Australia accessed Water Corporation's financial hardship program;
- (e) For each month of 2018 how many households in Western Australia accessed Water Corporation's financial hardship program; and
- (f) For each month of 2019 how many households in Western Australia accessed Water Corporation's financial hardship program?

Mr D.J. Kelly replied:

- (a)–(f) Under the former Liberal National Government, installing water flow restrictors was a go to option for non-payment of bills. New figures show the number of customers having their water reduced to a trickle for non-payment of bills across the state has reduced by more than 70 per cent, down from 2467 in 2016–17 under the previous Liberal National Government, to 797 last financial year.

The McGowan Government has introduced a range of new payment programs and financial assistance measures to make it easier for customers to pay their water bills. This includes new programs introduced in July 2018 such as Start Over, Time Assist and Medical Assist. Further, the Government has increased eligibility for Water Assist by reducing the minimum debt owed by customers from \$1,500 to \$750 in December 2017. This has seen a significant number of additional Western Australians assisted to pay their water bills.

Overdue notices sent have reduced significantly under the McGowan Government, with an average of 43,002 notices per month over the last financial year. Under the former Liberal National Government in the 2015–16 financial year the average was 61,406 per month. This is a 31% reduction. Overdue notices are issued automatically to all customers with outstanding bills once the due date has passed. They are not an indication of financial hardship.

[See tabled paper no 2644.]