

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING — TENANTS — UNPAID BILLS

1050. Hon ALANNA CLOHESY to the minister representing the Minister for Housing:

- (1) Does the Department of Housing have a policy to evict tenants for unpaid water or electricity bills?
- (2) If yes to (1), for each of unpaid electricity and water bills, how many tenants have been evicted over the past 12 months?
- (3) When there is a possible discrepancy in a tenant's water bill or it is unusually high, does the department check the bill before it pays the Water Corporation; organise a check for water leaks or plumbing defects prior to paying the bill; or challenge Water Corp over the bill and demand that Water Corp check its side of the meter before paying the bill?
- (4) Under its tenant management policies, does the department help or enable its tenants to access the Water Corp hardship schemes such as the water assist scheme and other schemes?

Hon KEN BASTON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The Department of Housing advises —

- (1) The department has a policy whereby a tenant must abide by the conditions of the tenancy agreement and the Residential Tenancies Act 1987. The terms of the tenancy agreement outline the tenant's responsibilities for the payment of all water consumption and electricity charges.
- (2) The department advises that it is unable to provide the information requested in the time available and requests that the member put this part of the question on notice.
- (3) No. The department has procedures in place whereby tenants can dispute water accounts. The Water Corporation also advises the department of abnormally high water accounts. The department may also become aware of high water bills via tenant complaints, and the department will work with the tenant to establish reasons for the high water consumption. If a leak is found, a plumber will carry out repairs and send a leak allowance request to the Water Corporation. If the Water Corporation agrees to reimburse the costs of the water, it will send a revised account to the department. The department will credit the tenant's water revenue account and advise the tenant.
- (4) When tenants have issues with arrears, the department provides referrals to financial counselling and support agencies in their local area.