

# Victorian Utility Consumption Survey 2007: Government Response

The Victorian Government is very pleased to release the final report of the Victorian Utility Consumption Survey 2007. The Victorian Utility Consumption Survey was conducted during 2007 by consultants, Roy Morgan Research for the Victorian Department of Human Services and Sustainability Victoria. This is the third survey in the series and reflects the Victorian Government's ongoing commitment to ensuring the affordability of essential services for vulnerable low-income Victorian households.

In conducting the third survey in this series, the Government has recognised the challenges faced by low-income households in adapting to the pressures of climate change. We understand that rising utility costs have the potential to be experienced disproportionately by low income Victorian households, and that these households are often less able to introduce measures to improve energy and water efficiency. Following on from previous surveys, this report identifies trends and issues about energy and water costs and consumption, and household experience of hardship in paying utility bills and municipal rates.

The Victorian Utility Consumption Survey is unique in being the only research that specifically targets concession cardholders on issues of affordability and consumption. The information derived from this research performs an important role in understanding social and economic disadvantage and issues of equity of access to quality universal services.

Notwithstanding the value of the information contained in this report, the Victorian Utility Consumption Survey, like all surveys faces some limitations. Conducting accurate consumption and billing trend analysis over the survey series is dependent on the ongoing provision of quality billing data from councils, water and energy businesses. In 2001, some of the data provided by energy retailers was unreliable, and so therefore some comparisons between results provided in the 2001 and 2006 surveys are also unreliable. In 1996 concession data on water was also of compromised quality, making trend analysis of water consumption and billing information problematic.

To assist with the interpretation of survey results, technical notes have been provided where specific findings should be read with some caution. These notes can be found as an attachment to this response.

Thank you for your interest in the Victorian Utility Consumption Survey 2007. The Victorian Government is committed to using the survey results to best inform the investments that are being made to tackling disadvantage and improving the outcomes for low-income households in our State.

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