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Warning to Victorian households: Next gas and electricity bills to sky rocket

Victorian families are urged to prepare for their next gas and electricity bills following findings in the St Vincent de Paul Society report, *Energy Prices July 2010 – January 2011: An update-report on the Victorian Tariff-Tracking Project*, released today.

Gas and electricity prices have risen by 18% over just six months, and people will face this added cost in their next bill. St Vincent de Paul Society Manager Social Policy Unit, Gavin Dufty is warning Victorians to prepare for this steep increase.

“Victorian households are already feeling a financial squeeze so we recommend that families plan ahead and put some money aside for what’s to come. Our report compares price variations over a six month period, so the latest price hikes revealed will be reflected in upcoming bills across the state,” said Mr Dufty.

“North Eastern suburbs and Eastern Victoria will be hardest hit by electricity rises, the Western suburbs of Melbourne will experience the highest gas increases, and gas increases will be higher than electricity for most Inner City households,” said Mr Dufty.

“Fixed supply charges continue to increase and it now costs some households almost \$1 a day simply to be connected to electricity.”

Mr Dufty also warns households to be wary of market offers which often include what appears to be a discount.

“Consumers need to be aware that even discounted offers, like those received for paying bills on time, will rise as most energy companies increase discount prices in line with the standard rates.

“We also urge the Essential Services Commission to update its YourChoice comparison website more regularly to allow Victorians to access up-to-date rates in the one location in order to make an informed choice.”

The Victorian Tariff-Tracking Project monitors electricity and gas tariffs in Victoria to allow consumer advocates to track utility changes as they occur. The project has tracked electricity and gas tariffs in Victoria from July 2008. The full report is available at <http://bit.ly/hu3G1K>.

St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria tips recommendations for Victorians:

1. Findings reveal what’s to come over next couple of months, so put some money aside for your next bill
2. If you haven’t shopped around already, now’s the time to do so
3. Make sure you read and understand your bill, and take particular notice of the fixed charge – low consumption households can save up to \$100 a year by switching to a lower fixed rate with higher consumption charges

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For more information or to arrange an interview with Gavin Dufty, please contact:

Patrick McClelland
pmcclelland@porternovelli.com.au
03 9289 9555 or 0409 499 419

Lauren Coleman
lcoleman@porternovelli.com.au
03 9289 9555 or 0413 254 545