



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2024-2025

Ms Nicole Lawder MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),
Miss Laura Nuttall MLA

**ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
DURING PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Asked by: Mrs Elizabeth Lee MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction

Redirected to: N/A

Reference: Uncorrected Hansard Transcript [49-50]

In relation to: **Utility hardship fund - eligibility and criteria**

Hearing Date: 24 July 2024

QTON lodgement date: 24 July 2024

Answer Due Date: 30 July 2024

MS LEE: Yes, but they were one-offs. Just in terms of the hardship fund, I think Mr Rutledge, you said that it is \$300,000 this year, it has been budgeted for. Have you taken into consideration how many households that will provide assistance for?

Mr Rutledge: No, we do that post-fact. So that one is administered, as I said, by ActewAGL retail for people as part of their hardship programs. So we, post-fact, get a report back from Actew, and that also informs if we need to—that goes into the discussions of government about what the utility concession would look like in each budget cycle.

MS LEE: Okay, and it was \$100,000 in last year's budget.

Mr Rutledge: Yes, it—

MS LEE: Do you have the numbers for how many households that went to?

Mr Rutledge: I will take that one on notice.

MS LEE: Thank you. And also, if you can just tell me the criteria or the eligibility to get the hardship—

Mr Rutledge: I will include that in that answer.

Shane Rattenbury MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

Number of households

4,505 vouchers were issued between 01 July 2023 and 30 June 2024. Households could receive a voucher for their electricity and potentially also for the gas bill as per the criteria below. The vouchers were issued by major retailers in the ACT such as ActewAGL, Origin Energy and Red Energy.

- Budget for FY23-24 was \$250,000. For FY 24-25 the budget has increased to \$300,000.
- In FY23-24 \$130,000 of the Utilities Hardship Fund was expended on vouchers for energy customers of ActewAGL, Origin Energy and Red Energy.

Criteria for Utility Hardship Fund

To be eligible for the Utility Hardship Fund, applicants must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Recipients of an ACT Government energy concession
- Holders of an Australian Government Pensioner Concession Card or Health Care Card, Department of Veterans Affairs Gold Veteran Card, White Veteran Card, and Orange Veteran Card
- Holders of a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, Low Income Health Care Card, and ACT Services Access Card
- Recipients of the Commonwealth disability support pension
- Those accessing an energy retailer's hardship program as defined by the National Energy Retail Law
- Those accessing support from one of the following organisations:
 - ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT)
 - Care Financial
 - St Vincent de Paul Society
 - The Salvation Army
 - St John's Care
 - Companion House

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2024-2025

Signature:



Date:

28/7/24

By the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction, Shane Rattenbury MLA