QTON No. 32

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Select Committee on Estimates 2026-2027

Inquiry into Appropriation Bill 2026–2027 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2026–2027

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Mr Thomas Emerson MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Finance

In relation to: Treasury and Pension Rates Rebate Scheme - Increase in cap

Hearing: 21/07/2026
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Transcript provided: 23/07/2026
Answer Due: 30/07/2026

Michelle Dowdell took on notice the following question(s):

MR EMERSON: Thank you. I wanted to ask about the Pensioner Rates Rebate Scheme. So yes, it is a rebate on rates providing a 50 per cent reduction, capped at $750. I was wondering when that cap was last increased.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Within my memory, I am sure; but I cannot remember when it was.

Mr Pirie: I suspect the team will give us an answer momentarily.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes.

MR EMERSON: The follow-up questions are based on the answer to that question so —

[…]

MR EMERSON: Was any consideration given in this budget to increasing the cap?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I am not sure—well, I mean, I have not—in terms of rate settings, that probably would have been brought forward by the Treasurer. But I am not sure we are really at liberty to talk about those sort of detailed considerations within the expenditure review process.

MR EMERSON: Okay. Perhaps just to take on notice with the response around when it was last increased, and if it has been increased a couple of times, kind of the history. I am curious about the percentage increase in residential rates since the cap was last increased, you know, the average increase in residential rates across the ACT since that time. How many people who are receiving the rebate are receiving the $750 cap, as opposed to a 50 per cent reduction that would be below the cap? Yes, well, and the other question is around consideration of increasing it further but, you know, we can debate that in the Assembly sometime.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes.

Mr Pirie: Yes, an important point to note is that the pensioners—in addition to the cap, they can defer their rates as well. So that is a mechanism that is there to help them manage cash flow pressures.

MR EMERSON: Yes, I mean, I am raising it because I have had pensioners reach out and say, "Well, I cannot afford it in the future either," you know what I mean? So that is why I thought I would raise it in the hearing.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes. I mean, I think what people sort of often do not appreciate about deferral is it comes with a simple interest rate. It is a relatively low rate of interest in terms of what you would normally expect for those kinds of debt to government. And there is no, you know, sort of requirement to pay it within a set period. So I recognise people do not like having a debt to the government, or leaving a debt to their estate, but it is actually, like, financially a pretty sensible option for a lot of people who are sitting on a very valuable property but do not have a high level of annual income.

MR EMERSON: Okay. All right, thank you. So those were all taken on notice, right?

Ms Dowdell: Yes.

Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

The Pensioner Rates Rebate scheme cap was last increased in 2021. Prior to 2021-22, the cap was $700.

In addition to the rebate, eligible pensioner households also receive support to help with their general rates bill:

- a $133 rebate is applied to the Police, Fire and Emergency Services Levy (PFESL). The rebate amount was $98 in 2024-25 and $115 in 2025-26.
- Eligible pensioner households may also choose to defer the payment of all or part of their rates charges. From the date of the deferral, a simple interest at a concession rate applies on rates deferred.

Across the ACT, the average percentage increase in residential rates (not including levies) from 2021-22 to 2026-27 was 21.9 per cent.

In 2025-26, 15,123 households received a rates and a PFESL rebate. Of these households, 7 per cent received a 50 per cent reduction in rates, which includes a 50 per cent rebate that applied prior to the introduction of a cap in 1997.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2026-2027

Signature: Date: 6/8/26

By the Minister for Finance, Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA