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31 October 2018

The Hon Andrew Barr
Chief Minister
ACT Government
Treasury and Economic Development
GPO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601

My wife and I are retirees aged in our mid-70s, both in possession of Concession Cards. We recently had cause to review our financial circumstances in the light of conversations with some fellow retirees. We consulted the ACT Government website and found the very impressive 'Utilities Concession' list, one that demands close and lengthy examination.

There is however a considerable impediment to the website being easily consulted, and the linked websites that lead from it. The following has been noted:

- The A-Z Assistance Index lists some 129 Fact Sheets and is most comprehensive. It covers a wide range of social issues reflecting compassionate governments in the ACT and NSW and the non-government entities listed;
- Any Utilities Concession sought requires the interrogation of at least three sites, notably now all privatised utilities. This itself raises a concern that in the future, if the utility is on-sold, the concessions presently on offer could be reduced or removed, and
- The large range of services on offer to ACT retirees invites the need to provide informed advice to the public.

There is a bewildering array of paths to any result that may be sought, and we feel for those retirees who may be visually deficient or suffer from other impairment. These are obvious difficulties to their questions being readily answered on the various websites, therefore it is concluded that many eligible people with an entitlement would be dissuaded from attempting a journey through the labyrinth without assistance. It is widely accepted that older Australians are not as adept in navigating the vagaries of the world wide web, so some assistance for them is necessary.

The solution appears to be a central coordinating body, preferably a government one, that could assist enquirers and resolve their questions.

Finally, it is requested that the privatised utilities providers in the ACT be compelled by legislation to allow a discount of fifty percent for eligible ACT citizens, and that it be a continuing cost to the utilities' financial operation on any transmission of business to a future buyer/s.

If the above issues can be examined and resolved, it would minimise the risk of confusion to the public, and contribute to the highest standards of compassionate, good government.

For your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Bill Thompson

(for TRB and DE Thompson)