

Submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART)

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Pensioners in the Dubbo Regional LGA currently receive a rebate that was set in 1993. It is a fixed figure, based on 50% of the rate at that time. It has not been indexed, or adjusted since then, so the concession has been eroded over time.

I find it odd that this review only appears to be looking at the ordinary rate and not the total charges levied by Councils. Could the service charges on water, waste, drainage and sewerage also be considered for concessions?

IPART's review of "Concessions for pensioners" identified the possible options of:

- No change.
- Rate deferral scheme.
- Asset test.

In the "Review of the Local Government Rating System", "Rating exemptions and concessions", IPART proposes, under "Concessions for pensioners" that "Eligible pensioners defer payment of rates up to \$250 or any other amount set by the State Government".

A deferral is not a concession; in fact in this case, it is a penalty. Nothing is conceded. The full amount is to be paid, with interest at the Government bond rate.

Many pensioners stay in the family home until incapable of self-support and the sale of the family home is often used to fund entry to a nursing home or other full care facility. The deferral system, which could cover a twenty year period for some individuals, would eliminate this possibility and create pressure on future governments.

"No change" is not an option, although if the principle were to be maintained, brought up to date and indexed for future years, it would be considered acceptable.

An "Asset test" could also be considered acceptable, as long as the family home is not taken into the calculation of asset. The value of the home cannot be considered as income or improve the ability to pay rates.

If an asset test is implemented, IPART or the Government, Local or State, would still need to consider the level of concession to be applied.

This submission is for the existing system to be brought up to date and indexed to the CPI or other acceptable measure.