

Saturday, 13th June 2009

CLAMPING DOWN ON FEES CHARGED TO PARK RESIDENTS

People who live in caravan and residential parks will benefit from new protections clarifying the fees they can be charged.

From tomorrow residents whose sites are not individually metered for gas, electricity or water consumption will only be required to make one regular payment to cover both rent and utilities.

Consumer Affairs Minister Gail Gago says “Some residents have complained that the uncertainty of what they will be charged for basic living requirements, on top of their rent, has left them feeling very anxious.”

“By bundling the costs of rent and utilities together residents will be able to better plan for their weekly expenses.”

If sites are individually metered park operators must provide residents with copies of accounts or receipts that show power or water consumption if requested.

As a further protection for residents, park operators can no longer charge a fee when drawing up a new residential park agreement or extending an existing lease.

The *Residential Parks Act 2007* was introduced to increase protections for park residents and to balance this with the interests of park owners. Additional provisions are now commencing to provide even greater protection for residents in the area of basic fees and charges.

“Since residential park laws were introduced over eighteen months ago park residents have benefited from similar rights and protections to consumers who rent property from a landlord. We are now closing the loop on vague charging practices so that residents can have a clearer picture about their living costs,” says Minister Gago.

Amendments to the regulations of the Act also allow park operators to charge residents a fee for any overnight visitors, provided that this is stipulated in the residential park agreement.

Minister Gago says “It’s reasonable for park operators to charge a small fee for additional guests to their parks, as this is their livelihood too.”

The Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) is distributing information to parks about the new changes.

For more information about the rights and responsibilities of park owners and residents contact OCBA’s Tenancies Branch on (08) 8204 9544 or visit www.ocba.sa.gov.au