

From:
Sent:
Subject:

27 August 2014 20:48
Water Charges submission to consultation exercise

I wish to make a quick submission in a few areas.

- Allowances for those living at home in full time education
- Allowances for babies
- Reduced charges for children's and Maternity hospitals (if not all)
- Support for low income families to put in water saving mechanisms
- Penalties and systems to report water theft by commercial entities
- Payment mechanisms that assist in family budget control and spread of costs (Without penalty)

Reduction in Charges for those in full time education or allowances for same

Last week and last before after the leaving cert results and the CAO offers we had all the hand wringing about how terrible it was that some socio-economic groups are poorly represented in third level education.

Of course the kids of Coombe, Crumlin , Bishops town(Kildare), and low wage income families aren't there, third level costs. Even in these days of so called free fees we still have this registration charge which is further topped with other charges one of which may be the water charge if it is applied to those over 18 in full time education

People who are in college are "unavailable for work" thus a source of income for some families , (be it the dole or a low paid job or social welfare benefits) is unavailable.

An allowance per child is only UP TO THE AGE OF 18 when same is in receipt of children's allowance

So if your child has worked hard is going to do you and your family proud and has thanks to the sacrifices you and she have made are staying on in education, furthering themselves not only for their own benefit but that of the Nation, you now have another cost to think of. One more thing you are going to think of is that while in college you will also be paying for the water they use. This might be of little consequence to some but to others where every penny counts..... There is already talk that the latest increase in fees will result in people dropping out. This exclusion of allowances for water use, for these non-earners is another penalty charge that will affect many. These kids in the main will be choosing colleges within a range where they stay at home as their parents can't afford neither flats nor digs.

This charge is yet another cost sacrifice that the family will make to get a decent education for their children.

The other thing is that they say up to the age of 18. My eldest daughter did the transition year, so she will be 19 in her leaving cert year. I found the transition year was a good year for her it gave her a chance to think about her future at a time when thanks to cuts in education there isn't going to be the guidance teachers who in the past would have provided the one to one guidance that might have assisted many. She like many others will still be in full time education at age 19 and hopefully studying hard for the leaving cert. This cut off at age 18

The system is stacking more and more against the future of Ireland our children.

So I suggest that in recognition all those living at home in full time first time 3rd level or second level education would also get a water allowance until the end of that education.

Water for babies

In the early stages of my children's life a good supply of water was essential, we had to keep high standards of hygiene and there were frequent baths and washes, when they started to crawl they operated on a hand to mouth

existence. i.e. If they got it on/into their hands pretty soon it was in their mouths ! Hygiene is thus very important and the key component of good hygiene is a adequate supply of water. Thus I would recommend a higher allowance in the 1st 18 months of life. This can be easily put in place as the system will be seeking all our pps numbers thus age will be known.

I would also hope that there will be a reduced meter charge for children's and maternity hospitals. On one side the DOH and HIQA are pushing for increase hygiene. I hope with the other hand that you are not making such simple things as hand hygiene prohibitively expensive. Remember our healthcare system is primarily ruled by the short-sighted accountants of the HSE

Water saving installations assistance to those on low income

It has been said that paying for water will encourage people to be more economical with their water it will but what if they can't afford to control wasteful internal house fixtures and fittings. Replacement of cisterns that are high volume single flush costs money. Replacement of old corroded steel or cast iron pipes costs money. Push taps in whb's might encourage children to be more cautious of use are €50 a plumber another 100. Aerators will reduce usage. Small leaks in cast iron heating systems will be left until the heating system breaks down and then... well and then, well and then what can one afford. Its going to be dam costly at that stage

Absence of these water use reduction features are mainly found in houses that date back before the 70's and 80's. In houses where those below certain incomes, the costs of making these changes might not be affordable. Water despite the charges is still wasted cos you can't afford to invest to get it fixed

In The SEAI administers a scheme that facilities grants to improve energy efficient in the homes of people in these situations, this reduces their outgoings and helps them out of the poverty trap. It allows them to keep their house warm and thus keeps them safe and healthy.

In the same way I would argue that if the aim of the charges is to make sure that water usage is more efficient then the system should do something to help ensure that people can be more efficient, epically the more vulnerable members of society. In the SEAI scheme (e-mail warmerhomes@seai.ie) One must be on the like of family income support, and have a house of a particular age and make an application to a limited pot. Might I suggest that both the regulator and the water authority might look at same and the potential for a similar initiative in regard to domestic water conservation measures.

Water theft by commercial contractors

I see fire hydrants now being used to fill up cleaning contractors and garden maintainers tanks at the start of the day. Penalties for these entities should be swift and merciless.

When I reported same recently in my own area, neither council nor water board responded each saying it was the other responsibility. This private foreign firm got away with their theft both times that were reported, after that gave up. We should not be paying for the boards failure to act. The must be obliged to respond or put in place systems to ensure matters such as this will increase are dealt with

Payment mechanisms

May I suggest some of the following

- 1) Optional Monthly deduction from social welfare. FIS or children's allowances this to assist people to spread the cost over the year rather than 4 big hits a year
- 2) Deduction from salary – similar to the home tax again allowing spreading of costs
- 3) Other mechanisms that allow people to either prepay or spread payments over the accounting period.

None of these should have associated charges that penalise those who are trying to manage limited financial resources.

The fist is also trying to allow for those who no longer have (for the moment) access to a current or other accounts where they can make ¼ ly or direct payments

I hope you will consider the above in your considerations

Thank you

