

## Penang to maintain free water supply for poor, CM says amid tariff revision

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*Chow said the water supply operator will continue to support families under the PPRT programme. — Picture by Sayuti Zainudin*

GEORGE TOWN, Jan 17 — The proposed Penang water tariff rate review will not affect the lower income group, especially those under the Projek Perumahan Rakyat Termiskin (PPRT) scheme, Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said today.

Chow, who is also Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chairman, said the water supply operator will continue to support families under the PPRT programme with free water supply up to 60,000 litres per cycle of two months, under its corporate social responsibility (CSR).

“In 2017, PBAPP provided support to 199 families under the PPRT programme, at a total cost of RM16,482,” he said in a statement issued today.

Families in the PPRT scheme must have a household income of RM790 per month or less.

Chow said PBAPP also gave “kampung loans” totalling RM133,870 to 90 lower income households in 2017 to pay for their water pipe connections.

He said even houses of worship, such as mosques, surau, churches and temples, were given rebates amounting to RM71,080 in 2017.

Under PBAPP’s CSR commitments, the water supply operator will provide free pipe connection to those under the PPRT scheme, interest-free kampung loans to households with an income less than RM1,000 for pipe connections and special tariff rates for places of worship.

“All these PBAPP CSR benefits will be extended in 2019 for the foreseeable future,” he said. He said this meant that claims that the water tariff rate review will affect the lower income groups were unfounded.

He reiterated that PBAPP has been subsidising domestic water consumption for the first 35,000 litres per month in Penang which benefited 604,547 domestic water consumers in 2017.

“In fact, PBAPP’s domestic water supply subsidy represents its highest cost CSR initiative in Penang,” he said.

He said PBAPP could not continue to sustain annual subsidies that totalled RM83.6 million last year.

“PBAPP will continue to subsidise the first 35,000 litres of domestic water consumption in Penang after the review,” he said.

He added that the only difference is that the subsidy will be lower.

In the state’s proposed water tariff rate review, the hike may be between 10 and 20 per cent of the current rate pending approval by the National Water Services Commission.

The Penang state government was heavily criticised, especially by their political opponents, for its plans to increase water tariff rates.

Chow launched a series of press conferences and statements in response to the criticisms and to explain the reasons behind the proposed rate hike.