



# Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

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## Press Statement

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### Time to reduce water wastage to reduce painful water bills

The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) says that it is time to reduce water wastage, not only to trim water bills but also to conserve our limited water resources. The primary reason is because Penangites have been over consuming processed water which is becoming a precious commodity.

While the water catchment area is only 6 per cent of the land area of the state, the population of the state has been increasing over the years. As seen in the table below, Penang Island's population grew by 31.71 per cent while that of Seberang Perai grew by 37.06 per cent between 2000 and 2018.

Estimated population of Penang ('000) 2000-2018										
	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Penang Island population	641.3	647.9	667.5	688.1	712.8	741.3	738.5	748.0	791.9	809.0
Seberang Prai population	699.1	742.4	775.3	804.3	834.1	868.5	872.6	897.6	934.0	958.2
<b>Total population</b>	<b>1,313.4</b>	<b>1,390.3</b>	<b>1,442.8</b>	<b>1,492.4</b>	<b>1,546.9</b>	<b>1,609.8</b>	<b>1,611.1</b>	<b>1,645.6</b>	<b>1,725.9</b>	<b>1,767.2</b>

The growth in population stresses the state's limited water resources and the domestic consumption per capita is 281 litres per person per day in 2019 which is high as compared to the national average of 201 litres and the 165 litres recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). It is obvious that Malaysians have wasteful habits even when compared with Singaporeans who use an average of 151 litres per person per day or the Thais at 193 litres.

Penang's water rate is supposed to be the lowest in the country because it is heavily subsidised. With the proposed increase in water rates, it is hoped that Penangites will value clean processed water more by:

- > Adopting water saving measures such as rainwater harvesting and the collection of condensed water from the air-conditioning system for watering plants or flushing the drains or toilets.
- > Checking the toilets for leaks.
- > Using a pail to contain the water needed to wash cars (instead of keeping the water flowing from a hose while doing so).
- > Using a pail of water to flush urine down the toilet bowl instead of flushing using the cistern. A single flush from a low-flow model can use up to 6.1 litres while the older models use up to 19 litres! A small pail has a capacity of about 2.25 litres and thus able to halve the consumption.
- > Taking shorter showers. Turn off the tap when not in use.
- > Turning water off while brushing teeth.
- > Installing time-delay automatic press self-closing faucets, particularly at commercial buildings, to reduce water wastage when people forget to turn off the tap after using.

- > Recycling water should be considered for both homes and businesses.
- > Public places (including businesses) should also consider installing urinals with infrared sensors that only flush when the urinal is used. This will save a considerable amount of water as compared to those using cisterns with auto syphons.
- > The Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) should also minimise water wastage by attending to public complaints about burst or leaky main pipes soonest possible. Provide a 24/7 hotline number for water supply complaints.
- > Conduct road shows with the objective of educating the public how to save water.
- > Fine those having public taps that leak, for instance at Rest & Recreation (R&R) toilets where taps or cisterns leak and they are left unattended.

The PBAPP should carry out its plans to improve its services and infrastructure. There is a need to build or upgrade treatment plants, carry out preventive maintenance and upgrading of reservoirs and pumping stations. Pipes that are near the end of their lifespan have to be changed to prevent non-revenue water losses. Penang has to find other water sources because it is currently obtaining 84 percent of raw water resources from Sungai Muda.

The PBAPP proposed the construction of a desalination plant to address the increasing water supply needs in Balik Pulau and its surrounding areas as well as for Penang South Reclamation (PSR) project by 2030. While we do not object to the construction of the desalination plant because of the island's growing population, we do not see the need to proceed with PSR which will further aggravate the state's water situation.

The increase in water rate should serve as a deterrent to water wasters but PBA should provide rebates for the poor in particular those with monthly water consumption of less than 20,000 litres so they are not affected by the hike.

However, we urge the PBAPP to consider implementing the proposed water rate structure after the pandemic to relieve people of the financial hardship. Moreover, businesses and the manufacturing industry's water consumption would have dropped drastically because of the Movement Control Order (MCO) and staff having to work from home.

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**Consumers Association of Penang**