

The power to choose



Getting Help Paying Your Residential Electricity Bills

The National Energy Customer Framework recognises that electricity is an essential service and that residential customers need to be able to rely on their electricity staying connected, even when they experience temporary or ongoing financial hardship.

Having difficulty paying your residential electricity bill?

Your retailer can help by offering you a number of options; from something as simple as providing an extension on the due date for your bill, to entering into a payment plan. The important thing is to contact your retailer straight away, to explain your situation, and get an agreed payment plan or debt reduction arrangement in place.

Your retailer can provide you with information about:

- Independent and confidential financial counselling services to help you manage your bills and other household expenses in the long term.
- Government payment assistance, such as the State Government's pensioner concession and the Health Care Card holder concession.

Steps you can take to reduce your energy use and costs are available from www.livinggreener.gov.au.

Access to payment assistance

It is important to be honest about what you can afford to pay because if you do not meet the payments in your payment plan, you could have your electricity disconnected. If this happens, and you need to be reconnected, you may have to pay a fee, an increased security deposit, and whatever you owe.

If you have been identified by your retailer as a hardship customer or you write to your retailer stating that you are experiencing financial difficulty, they must offer you a payment plan. Your retailer may not offer you a payment plan if:

- you have had a payment plan cancelled twice in the past 12 months because you have not met the agreed payment terms; or
- you have been using the energy supplied to your house illegally.

If you meet the requirements of your payment plan, your retailer cannot disconnect you.

If you receive Centrelink benefits, your retailer may allow you to pay some, or all of what you owe with Centrepay. Under this arrangement, you work out what you can afford to pay from your pension or Centrelink benefit and it is transferred straight into your electricity account.

If you are refused access to your retailer's customer assistance regime and you cannot resolve your dispute with the retailer directly, contact the Energy Ombudsman on 1800 001 170 (free call in Tasmania).

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Longer term payment assistance

Contact your retailer if you need help paying your bills on an ongoing basis, or are experiencing longer term financial difficulties. For more information, you can read your retailer's customer hardship policy.

For additional information see Fact Sheet 9, *Customer Protection*.

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