

Coronavirus Information Sheet

Energy Relief

2 April 2020



The Victorian Government already has a framework that means energy companies must support anyone who has difficulty paying their bill. These are:

Key energy protections for Victorians

- Flexible payment options
- Debt repayments put on hold for six months for households who cannot pay for their ongoing usage
- No disconnection for electricity or gas customers who receive bill assistance or participate in payment plans
- No debt collection for households who receive bill assistance

If you have new or ongoing difficulties paying your bills?

1. Contact your energy company and ask for a payment plan.
2. Be honest about what you can regularly afford to pay on your debt.
3. If you have \$55 or more owing, you have the options to:
 - repay the amount owed over at least 2 years (while also paying for usage)
 - put on hold the amount owed for at least six months, while you continue to pay & they help you lower your energy costs to a level you can afford, and place you on the lowest price energy deal (for your home).

Other things you can do:

Talk to your energy company

By opening up communication you can get the support you need, and avoid any difficulties that could lead to disconnection.



Change how often you pay

Pay smaller amounts more often or pay in advance when you have the money.



Check all concessions are applied

Concessions can easily fall off accounts so it's worth checking in with the energy company now and every 12 months.



Ask for the company's 'best offer'

Ask your energy company if you are on the 'best offer'. Energy companies must now tell you if they have a cheaper energy deal available.



Work with you energy company

Ask the energy company about advice on other assistance available (including utility relief grants - see overleaf for more information).

For more detailed information and step by step support visit
www.energyinfohub.org.au

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Energy networks across Australia have announced a **new** suite of measures to provide support to customers enduring hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These are:

New electricity and gas relief package

Other than, what Victorian's can already access (see front page), the new package includes:

- Residential and small business customers who indicate they're in financial stress can access hardship arrangements, regardless of whether they meets the 'usual' criteria.
- Prioritise the safety of customers who require life support equipment.
- Modify existing payment plans if a customer's changed circumstances make this necessary.
- Provide clear and up-to-date communications with customers about the measures and available payment plans, energy efficiency advice and fault repair.
- Minimise the frequency and duration of planned outages for critical works.



Utility relief grant scheme

Utility relief grants provide help to pay a mains electricity, gas or water bill that is overdue due to a temporary financial crisis (eligibility criteria apply).

You can receive a maximum of \$650 on each utility type (electricity, gas and water) in a two-year period (or \$1,300 for households with a single source of energy (e.g. electricity only)).

Phone your electricity, gas or water retailer to request an application. Or visit <https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/utility-relief-grant-scheme>.



IMPORTANT:

If you are finding that you are unable to pay your bill call your energy company as early as possible and talk with them about what options are available to you.



Complaints:

1. Contact the retailer:

First, phone the energy retailer. Tell them:

- what the problem is, and
- how you want it fixed.

Write down when you contacted them, their name and what you discussed. If they give you a reference number, also write this down.

2. Contact the energy ombudsman

If you are still unhappy, contact the energy ombudsman on :

Energy and Water

Ombudsman Victoria on

1800 500 509 or visit

www.ewov.com.au to lodge an online application or to live chat