

Energy and Water issues –
Useful information for Victorian community agencies

○ **‘Do Not Call’ Register**



To stop phone sales calls, consumers can enrol in the Do Not Call Register (administered by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)). You can register up to five numbers, including mobile phone and landline numbers. Go to the Do Not Call website (www.donotcall.gov.au) or phone 1300 792 958. It takes 30 days for the registration to become effective.

○ **‘Do Not Knock’ stickers**



To reduce door-to-door sales, consumers can get a ‘Do Not Knock’ sticker from the Consumer Action Law Centre – by sending it a stamped and self-addressed envelope (to Level 7, 459 Little Collins Street Melbourne 3000), or downloading it from the Consumer Action Law Centre’s website (www.consumeraction.org.au). You can print the image on plain paper and put it up on your door. The sticker is also available from a variety of community agencies listed on the Consumer Action Law Centre’s website.

○ **Comparing energy marketing offers**



The Essential Services Commission (ESC) has an energy price comparator on its website (www.esc.vic.gov.au) – it helps consumers compare a price offer they’ve received with their recent bills. The ESC has further published useful tips on how to choose the best energy plan for you on www.esc.vic.gov.au/yourchoice.

There are also some commercial websites that compare multiple offers. EWOV doesn’t endorse these websites. These websites may not have all energy retailers’ offers on them, so a consumer may not get a full comparison of offers. Examples include:

- www.choiceswitch.com.au (also: www.uSwitch.com.au)
- www.switchselect.com
- www.shoparound.com.au
- www.artog.com.au
- www.goswitch.com.au
- www.energywatch.com.au (also: www.connectmypower.com.au)
- www.ratedetective.com.au

○ **Information on financial assistance**

There are a range of energy and water concessions available to eligible concession card holders, as well as Utility Relief Grants and Home Wise Grants (previously called the Capital Relief Grant). To find out more, phone the Concessions Unit (1800 658 521) or visit its website (www.cyf.vic.gov.au/concessions).



If consumers have difficulties to pay their utility bills, a financial counsellor can assist in assessing a customer's capacity to pay to negotiate a sustainable payment plan with the company. To find out about **financial counsellors** in your area of Victoria, ring Consumer Affairs Victoria on 1300 55 81 81 or visit the Financial and Consumer Rights Council's website (www.fcrc.org.au).

○ **Information on other assistance schemes**



Eligible consumers can access a **No Interest Loan (NIL)** Scheme whereby they can borrow \$800 to \$1,000 for essential household appliances. The schemes are accredited by Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services. It is now in partnership with the National Australia Bank to offer low interest loans on a wider scale to give low income clients access to financial products. For more information, including details on contacts to local NIL providers, see Good Shepherd's website (www.goodshepvic.org.au).



The **Phoenix Fridges scheme** reconditions and retrofits donated fridges to make them energy efficient and sells them cheaply through Brotherhood of St Laurence stores. For further information see the Phoenix Fridges' website (www.phoenixfridges.com.au).

○ **For more information: see www.ewov.com.au > 'Community agency info'. The specific webpages cover:**

- How can EWOV assist?
- Need help paying bills? (with links to companies' hardship policies)
- Disconnection and restriction for debt (including information on wrongful disconnection payment (WDP))
- Ensuring consumers are treated fairly
- Government concessions and grants
- Moving in or moving out?
- Choosing an energy retailer
- Energy and water prices
- Using energy and water efficiently (with links to energy/water efficiency tools)
- Housing issues and EWOV
- Water and drought
- Frequently asked questions
- EWOV's community outreach and policy work