



CONCESSIONS AND GRANTS

Information about Victorian electricity, gas and water concessions and grants

Do you have a concession card? You may be eligible for concessions on your electricity, gas and water bills. This fact sheet explains some of the different types of concessions that are available.

The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) offers a variety of concessions to eligible cardholders to assist low-income Victorians with energy and water bills. If you have a relevant concession card, you may be eligible for a concession/s. Contact your energy or water company to apply for concessions. The eligible cards are:

Pensioner Concession Card



Health Care Card



Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card



Veterans' Affairs Gold Card For All Conditions



Veterans' Affairs Gold Card TPI



Veterans' Affairs Gold Card War Widow



Veterans' Affairs Gold Card POW & EDA



Some of the energy concessions

The **Annual Electricity Concession** provides a 17.5% discount on electricity bills all year round¹.

The **Winter Gas Concession** provides a 17.5% discount on gas bills for usage between 1 May and 31 October each year².

The **Life Support Concession** provides a quarterly rebate on electricity bills for use of certain life support machines.

¹ This concession does not apply to the first \$171.60 of an annual electricity bill.

² This concession does not apply to the first \$62.40 of a winter gas bill.

The **Medical Cooling Concession** provides a 17.5% discount on the electricity used between 1 November and 30 April. This is for eligible cardholders with specified medical conditions including multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, quadriplegia, scleroderma or other medical conditions that mean the body is unable to regulate its own temperature.

The **Controlled Load Electricity Concession (formerly the Off-peak Concession)** provides a 13% reduction on the controlled load usage charges on all electricity bills.

The **Service to Property Charge Concession** reduces the supply charge for concession households that do not use much energy.

The **Electricity Transfer Fee Waiver Concession** covers the transfer fee charged to connect supply. This must be claimed within 12 months of supply being connected.

The **Non-Mains Energy Concession** is an annual rebate for eligible cardholders who use LPG for domestic heating or cooking—and/or whose supply is individually metered for electricity but paid to a caravan park, accommodation owner, or embedded network operators (common in newer apartment buildings).

How energy concessions are applied

Concessions are calculated based on the remaining account balance after any retailer discounts and/or solar credits have been applied.

Some of the water concessions

The **Water and Sewerage Concession** provides a 50% discount off water and sewerage charges up to an annual maximum amount.

The **Non-Mains Water Connection** helps cardholders, who are not connected to reticulated or mains water, with the costs of buying non-mains water for domestic usage, e.g. buying carted water for rainwater tanks.



Excess Energy Concession

Concession households with annual electricity bills of more than \$2,725, or \$1,518 for gas (between 1 May and 31 October), need to apply for the Excess Electricity Concession or Excess Gas Concession to continue to receive the 17.5% concession on electricity and gas consumed above these amounts.

Recipients of the Life Support Concession and/or the Medical Cooling Concession are exempt from the need to apply for the Excess Electricity Concession and Excess Gas Concession.

Backdating concessions

If you have not received applicable concessions on your energy or water bills, and were eligible to receive them, they can be backdated for up to 12 months. If you did not receive concessions on your **water bills** for more than 12 months, you can make an application to DHHS for backdating if there are exceptional circumstances involved. Contact the Concessions Information Line on **1800 658 521** for more information.

Other Victorian Government Assistance

The Utility Relief Grant Scheme (URGS) and the Non-Mains Utility Relief Grant Scheme (NURGS) provide assistance for residential customers who are unable to pay their utility bills due to a temporary financial crisis.

Assistance may be provided to low-income households suffering a short-term (within last 12 months) financial crisis who are unable to pay for a current electricity, gas, water or LPG bill and who are at risk of disconnection, restriction of supply, or non-supply of LPG bottles.

URGS is also available to eligible customers who experience difficulties paying for other non-mains sources such as LPG, diesel and petrol (for a generator), heating oil, firewood, metered electricity from an embedded network and carted water. Generally, you need to have one of the following concession cards:

- Pensioner Concession Card
- Health Care Card
- DVA Gold Card.

Special conditions for non-concession card households

If you do not have a concession card but are registered with your utility company's hardship program and your household's income is equal or less than the equivalent to the Commonwealth maximum income rate for part age pensioners, you may still be eligible for URGS.

You need to demonstrate that unexpected hardship has left you seriously short of money so that you cannot pay your utility bills without assistance and risk disconnection or non-supply, and meet one of the following criteria:

- A significant increase in usage.
- A recent decrease in income.
- High unexpected expenses on essential items.
- The cost of shelter is more than 30% of the household income.
- The cost of utility usage is more than 10% of the household income.

Water and Sewerage Connection Scheme

The Water and Sewerage Connection Scheme is for eligible cardholders who are required to connect to a mains water and sewerage service under the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program. Applicants must be home owners and have no savings to cover the cost of connection. The grant covers the full cost of connection and does not have to be paid back.

Reasons things go wrong

Many customers rely on concessions to help them make their electricity, gas and water services more affordable. Although applying concessions to customer accounts is usually straightforward, things can sometimes go wrong.

Sometimes a problem within an energy or water company's billing system can result in concessions not being applied to accounts. Additionally, it is the responsibility of customers to provide their concession card details to energy or water companies.

Important: The name on the concession card must exactly match the name of the account holder. If it doesn't, the concession may not be applied to bills.

Energy and water companies must also tell customers who are having trouble paying that there are concessions they may be able to apply for—including one-off grants such as URGS.

More information

For more information about concessions, URGS and NURGS, please contact the Concessions Unit of the Victorian DHHS on **1800 658 521** or visit its website: <http://ow.ly/ZSe6E>

Fact sheets for each concession can be found here: <http://ow.ly/ZSeb7>

For more information about URGS and NURGS visit: <http://ow.ly/ZSeeU>