

How can your retailer help you manage your bills?

Information for Victorian electricity and gas customers

→ Under the Victorian **Energy Retail Code** your retailer **must** help you manage your bills if you cannot pay them on time.

The type of help you are entitled to depends on your situation. Use the quick guide below to check your energy rights. Please contact EWOV if you believe your retailer has not offered you appropriate help.

What are my energy rights? An easy checklist:

SITUATION 1:

"I can't pay my bills, and I have more than \$55 in energy debt."

Your retailer must contact you within 21 days after the bill due date to talk to you about how it can help. You are entitled to:

- Have your debt being placed on hold for 6 months. Your retailer may extend the hold period if you reduce your usage and make payments during the initial six months.
- A payment plan based on what you can pay on a regular basis.
- Specific advice about how to reduce your energy use.
- A check to see if you are eligible for the Utility Relief Grant Scheme (URGS) and any other energy concessions. If you need help applying for the Utility Relief Grant, your retailer must help you give the application to the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Check if your tariff is giving you the best available rate.

Practical assistance, including *but not limited to*:

- A phone-based or in-home energy audit to help you understand how to reduce your energy usage and bills.
- Regular updates to help you understand how you can lower your energy usage.

DID YOU KNOW?



If you cannot pay your bills on time, you have the right to ask your retailer for help.

Retailers must work with you to help reduce your energy debt and ongoing energy costs.



CAN THEY DISCONNECT MY SUPPLY?

Generally, yes. This is the last resort taken to stop your debt from growing.



BUT, a retailer cannot disconnect your supply:

- > if your debt is \$300 or less; and/or
- > you have an active payment plan

SITUATION 2:

*"I can pay my bills, but I have **more** than \$55 in energy debt."*

Your retailer must contact you within 21 days after the bill due date to talk to you about how it can help. You are entitled to:

- A payment plan to help you pay your debt within two years.
- A check to see if you are eligible for the Utility Relief Grant Scheme (URGS) and any other energy concessions. If you need help applying for the Utility Relief Grant, your retailer must help you give the application to the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Check if your tariff is giving you the best available rate (effective until 31 March 2021).
- Specific advice about how to reduce your energy usage.

SITUATION 3:

*"I can pay my bills, and my energy debt is **less** than \$55."*

If you want your retailer to help, it must give you three of the four options below:

- An extension on the due date of a bill at least once every 12 months.
- Let you pay at different intervals.
- Let you make payments in advance.
- A payment plan to help you manage your bills,



A lot of other organisations can help you too, including:

In addition to your energy retailer or water company, a lot of other organisations can help you too, including:

- **The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services**

1800 658 521 or visit:

<http://ow.ly/ZSe6E> to check your eligibility.

- **National Debt Helpline**

1800 007 007

Provides free, independent and confidential financial counselling service, if you need help working out how much you can afford to pay.

- **1800Respect**

1800 737 732

National family violence telephone counselling.

If you believe your electricity, gas or water company has not offered you appropriate help, please contact EWOV – we're here to help! EWOV is a free and independent dispute resolution service.

Online: ewov.com.au

Freecall: 1800 500 509

Email: ewovinfo@ewov.com.au

Post: GPO Box 469, Melbourne, Victoria 3001

Translating and Interpreting Service: 131 450

National Relay Service: 133 677