

Energy Advice Pack

Support and information about your energy use¹

Seek assistance from your energy provider

If you are having trouble paying the bill, don't be afraid to call your energy company.

Energy companies must provide assistance programs for households, this includes delivering concessions and assistance for those experiencing payment difficulties – if households are really struggling they also have to provide individually tailored programs.

All companies must provide basic protection for their energy customers. This applies to electricity and gas.

Protections include:

- How frequently households can receive a bill;
- Reminder and other notices;
- Minimum disconnection amounts;
- Minimum payment time prior to disconnection;
- The provision of flexible payment arrangements;
- Information on concessions on bills.

If you are assisting somebody having troubles paying their energy bill, remember you can only call on behalf of another person if you have that person with you at the time of the call. The only other alternative is if that person has given you prior authorisation for you to speak to the company on their behalf.

Standard Contact Details

AGL 131 245	Australian Power & Gas 133 298
Click Energy 1800 775 929	Country Energy 132 356
Dodo Power & Gas 133 636	Momentum Energy 1300 662 778
Lumo Energy 1300 115 866	Powerdirect 1300 307 966
Neighbourhood Energy 1300 764 860	Simply Energy 138 808
Origin Energy 132 461	Red Energy 131 806
TRU / Energy Australia 133 466	

¹ This information has been developed jointly between St Vincent de Paul and AGL Energy for all energy users (not just AGL customers) in Victoria to support households struggling to meet their ongoing energy needs.

Note this information is updated 6 monthly and may not be the most up to date at the time of reading.

State Government support programs

The State Government also offer a number of utility concessions which you may be able to access.

You can access the following support measures for which you are eligible by contacting your energy retailer.

Eligibility required:

To be eligible for a concession in VIC, customers must meet the following criteria:

- > Hold an eligible concession card
- > The name on the energy account must match the name on the concession card
- > Concession is only available for the customer's primary place of residence. This is the place they live. Concessions are not available on holiday houses.

The following concession cards are eligible for concession in VIC:

- > Centrelink Pensioner Concession Card & Health Care Card
- > Department of Veterans Affairs Pensioner Concession Card, Gold Card with the status of War Widow (WW), Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) or Department of Veterans Affairs Gold Card Extreme Disability Adjustment (EDA).

Main types of support available:

Electricity – Annual Electricity Concession (AEC)

The AEC rebate amount is 17.5% off consumption and service charges (inc GST). The AEC rebate is capped at \$439.00 (excl GST) during an annual period from 1 December to 30th November at which point an application will need to be made for the Excess Energy Concession.

Gas – Winter Energy Concession

Applicable for gas consumption and service charges between 1st May to the 31st Oct.

The WEC rebate amount is 17.5% off consumption and service charges (inc GST). The WEC rebate is capped at \$245.83 (excl GST) between 1st May to 31st October, at which point an application will need to be made for the Excess Energy Concession.

Electricity– Excess Energy Concession

Eligible customers can receive 17.5% off the consumption and service charge (including GST). The Excess Energy concession for Electricity will apply up to the 30th November each year, at which point the AEC will apply.

Excess Electricity Concession is where the AEC cap of \$439.00 (exc GST) has been exceeded and an application is to be made to continue to receive the concession amount of 17.5%

Gas – Excess Energy Concession

Applicable for gas consumption and service charges between 1st May to the 31st Oct.

Eligible customers can receive 17.5% off the consumption and service charge (including GST). Excess Gas Concession is where the AEC cap of \$245.83 (exc GST) has been exceeded and an application is to be made to continue to receive the concession amount of 17.5%

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Electricity – Medical Cooling Concession

Eligibility required:

The account holder must be a concession card holder and a member of the household must have an inability to self-regulate their body temperature.

The electricity account holder or permanent member of the account holder's household must have a qualifying medical condition as determined by the department. Medical Cooling concession is not available to account holders who have an eligible condition but do not hold an eligible concession card.

Qualifying Conditions Include:

- Multiple sclerosis
- Lymphedema
- Parkinson's Disease
- Fibromyalgia
- Post-Polio Syndrome/poliomyelitis
- Motor Neurone Disease

Customers must complete an application form and have it signed by their Medical Practitioner.

Support available:

From the 1st November to the 30th April customers are eligible for 17.5% off usage and supply charges (GST incl).

Electricity - Life Support Concession

Eligibility required:

The account holder must be a concession card holder a member of the household must require the use of an in-home life support machine to sustain their life. An application signed by their Medical Practitioner confirming life support use must be lodged with the retailer.

Support available:

Customers who have provided a completed application form and have one of the following machines are eligible for the equivalent of 1880kWh/year based on the customer peak tariff per rebate on quarterly electricity bill.

- Oxygen Concentrator
- Intermittent Peritoneal Dialysis Machine
- Haemodialysis Machine

Customers with life support equipment should contact their retailer immediately to register their machine, this will ensure they are not disconnected and in the event of an emergency or planned interruption have information or advanced notification of what to do.

Registered life support customers cannot under Victorian law be disconnected for debt.

Electricity & gas – Utility Relief Grant Scheme (URGS)

Eligibility required:

Customers should call their retailer to request a form, after completing the form it should be returned to the DHS within 16 days for the application to be assessed.

Eligibility for URGS can include a number of factors such as:

- Experiencing family violence
- Unexpected increase for essential items or services (within the last 12 months for first grant or within the period since the previous grant for second and subsequent grant); or
- unexpected decrease in income

Support available:

An URGS grant can be up to \$1,300 every 2 years for single fuel households and up to \$650 for dual fuel households every 2 years depending on the level of debt. This will be determined by the Victorian Department of Human Services. The grant is available once every 2 years per fuel in VIC however can be applied for multiple times throughout the period up to the point the limit is reached.

Essential Medical Equipment Payment

Eligibility required:

Customers may be eligible for this payment if they or a person in their regular care at home: are covered by a Commonwealth concession card issued by Dept of Human Services or the Department of Veterans' Affairs; or provides proof that the specified equipment, or heating or cooling is medically required, provided as: a certification from a Medical Practitioner, or evidence that the essential medical equipment currently qualifies for assistance under one of the state or territory government schemes, or the Department of Veterans' Rehabilitation Appliance Program.

This option does not apply to medically required heating and cooling. The customer may also need to prove that they, or the person they care for, contributes to the payment of the home energy account.

Support available:

The Essential Medical Equipment Payment is an annual \$149 payment to people who experience additional increases in home energy costs from the use of essential medical equipment to manage their disability or medical condition. This payment must be claimed.

Customers can apply for the Essential Medical Equipment Payment online at my.gov.au.

Other concessions available:

- Electricity Transfer / Moving Waiver (for concession card holders)
- Electricity – Controlled Load concession
- Electricity – Service to property charge concession (when usage is lower than the service charge)
- Non-Mains Energy Concession for concession card holders who use LPG for domestic heating or cooking and or/are individually metered for electricity but who pay a caravan park or proprietor.

For additional information on any of these concessions contact your retailer or the Department of Human Services.

Energy Saving Tips

There are also some really simple things you can do around the home to help save energy and money, these are only suggestions and need to be considered if appropriate to the situation.

1. Cold wash and natural dry and reduce your energy usage charges by up to \$195 per year.

The easiest way to save is to wash your clothes in cold water and dry them using the sun or natural air.

Household saving: Up to 9% of annual energy usage bill.

2. Watch how long you have your heating and cooling appliances going and how hot or cold the house is, being mindful of this can reduce your energy costs by up to \$357 per year.

For example in winter, set the thermostat on your heater to between 18°C and 20°C. Every one degree lower or higher can add 10% to home heating costs.

In summer, air conditioners should be set between 23°C and 26°C. Every one degree lower or higher can add 10% to your costs.

3. Closing doors to rooms that don't need heating or cooling, such as bathrooms and the laundry, can prevent up to 75% of heat loss.



4. Switch off the TV when not watching it as this adds up if you have a few TVs in your home.

TIP - Did you know in one day, a widescreen TV can use more energy than a dishwasher, washing machine and clothes dryer combined? When you leave the room, it's a good idea to switch off the screen, and then turn off at the power point, if need be.

5. If you have a set top box, switch it off when not in use. This applies to other appliances, they cost you money when you are not using them

TIP - Some simple add on devices add more to your bill. For example a set-top box is usually on stand-by for 40% of the time. If it's not in use, switch it off at the power point and save.

6. Take shorter showers. Check to see if taps are turned off completely to stop drips.
7. Use a microwave or electric frypan instead of an oven.
8. Run the dishwasher only when it's full.
9. Put lids on saucepans for faster cooking. Use the right-sized saucepan on the right-sized element or burner.
10. Check your fridge seals and temperature regularly.
11. Replaced incandescent globes with compact fluorescent lights.
Turn off lights when you leave the room.
12. Draught-proof your home - checking and sealing leaks and cracks can save up to 25% of your heating and cooling bills.
13. Limit the use of small portable heaters.

Other available support

Sometimes financial hardship can also be related to other challenges faced by your household. Complementary support measures may be of some assistance.

Specific support is available for eligible households and individuals. Below is a list of services provided and where to go for help or more information.



One of the key roles of **beyondblue** is to produce and refer people to accurate, up to date, easy to read information on depression, anxiety and related disorders. This includes information relating to: Depression, anxiety disorders, postnatal depression, bipolar disorder, diagnosis, treatment, recovery, young people, men, family and friends, chronic illness. A range of information is available.

Call the info line 1300 22 4636 or go to www.beyondblue.org.au



Cancer Council is a national non-government cancer control organisation with the aim of facilitating prevention, research, support and care. Cancer Council Victoria provide support services to provide you with reliable info and practical advice on any type or stage of cancer. They can also link you with a range of support services, for the cost of a local call.

Call the Helpline on 13 11 20 or go to www.cancervic.org.au



CanTeen's mission is to support, develop and empower young people living with cancer. We do this by providing an Australia-wide peer support network for 12 to 24 year-olds, including: Patients - young people who have been diagnosed with cancer; Siblings & Offspring - young people who have an immediate family member (brother, sister, parent or primary carer) who has been diagnosed with cancer; and Bereaved Siblings & Offspring - young people who have had an immediate family member die from cancer.

Contact CanTeen for information - free call 1800 226 883 or go to www.canteen.org.au



Kids Helpline is Australia's only free, private and confidential telephone and online counselling service specifically for young people aged between 5 and 25. The service aims to empower young people by assisting them to: Develop options; Identify and understand the consequences of a particular course of action; Facilitate more productive relationships with family and friends, and provide information on local support services.

Kids can call the helpline on free call 1800 55 1800 or go to www.kidshelp.com.au



The Salvation Army has provided support to those in need in Australia for over 130 years. They provide emergency relief support, family support, homeless and accommodation services, drug and alcohol addiction support programs, problem gambling support, counselling and accommodation for victims of domestic violence and counselling and support through court and prison services.

For more information contact 13 72 58 or go to www.salvationarmy.org.au



The Smith Family is a national, independent children's charity helping disadvantaged Australians to get the most out of their education, so they can create better futures for themselves. The Smith Family works with communities across the country to assist Australians living in hardship. Some of their staff and volunteers are based in schools, others work through community organisations and some have their own Smith Family offices.

For more information go to www.thesmithfamily.com.au