

Tuesday, 8 January 2008

More families stay connected through customer support program

Households recovering from Christmas spending are being urged to contact EnergyAustralia if they are having difficulty paying their bills.

EnergyAustralia's Manager Director George Maltabarow said the expense of holidays, Christmas and getting kids ready for school could place household budgets under pressure.

"The rising cost of living is putting a lot of stress on families so we are giving them extra help to manage their bills," Mr Maltabarow said.

"Our EnergyAssist program is designed to stop customers being disconnected, but it can also help customers save money and become more energy efficient by taking a few very simple steps.

"It's important for people to try and plan ahead when it comes to bills and it is far better to contact us early before waiting to the last minute to ask for help."

As well as helping some customers better manage their energy debts while keeping their electricity or gas supply connected, EnergyAssist can also help reduce their future bills. Customers taking part in the program are offered:

- Longer-term payment plans
- Regular payment options through Centrepay
- Energy audits to help customers reduce energy costs by improving the energy efficiency of their homes
- Incentives for payment such as kits including energy efficient light bulbs and showerheads
- Referrals to government and community agencies for other support identified during case management.

Participation in the EnergyAssist program has more than doubled over the past 12 months helping to drive down the number of people having their electricity disconnected. In fact, over the past two years 1800 fewer customers have been cut off – that's a 20 per cent reduction since the program began.

Over the past two years, almost 10,000 customers have registered for the EnergyAssist programme. This includes about:

- 3,000 customers from the Hunter region
- 2,000 from the Central Coast
- 4,000 from Sydney; and
- 80 from the ACT

Customers wanting to find out more about the EnergyAssist program should call EnergyAustralia on 13 15 35.

Media contact: EnergyAustralia News Pager 02 9966 7985