EnergyAustralia National Hardship Policy

At EnergyAustralia, we understand that from time-to-time you may experience financial hardship and will need additional assistance and flexibility. Our hardship program is designed to support you to manage your energy use and costs.

What is Hardship?
EnergyAustralia defines hardship as customers who are willing to pay their bills, but do not have the capacity to do so. If you are undergoing a sudden change in circumstance, which has resulted in temporary financial difficulty, we can give you additional time to pay. If you are experiencing long-term hardship and are on a low and/or fixed income such as a pension or an allowance, we will refer you to our EnergyAssist team, who can accept you into our hardship program and offer assistance over a longer period.

Our Hardship Program
EnergyAustralia approaches hardship with sensitivity and flexibility. We will treat you with empathy and respect. We encourage you to contact us either personally or through a third party such as a financial counsellor.

Identifying Hardship

If you are struggling financially, EnergyAustralia encourages you to contact us either personally or through a third party, such as a financial counsellor or a welfare agency. We understand you may feel uncomfortable discussing your financial problems, therefore, we also employ strategies to assist in identifying vulnerable customers.

Early Response to Hardship

If you have been identified as in hardship, EnergyAustralia's early response is as follows:

- You will be referred to the EnergyAssist team
- A case manager will be assigned and you will be contacted within 24 hours of referral to the EnergyAssist team
- You will be contacted by your case manager, who will review your market retail contract
- The case manager will advise you of the following assistance: payment plans; government grants; Centrepay; assistance options; financial counsellors; energy efficiency information; and home energy audits
- You will be sent a letter confirming your entry into the hardship program

Reviewing Market Retail Contracts
We will review the appropriateness of your market retail contract upon entry into our hardship program. If you receive Centrelink benefits, you will be transferred to a contract that allows payment via Centrepay. This market retail contract review will be conducted at no cost to you and there will be no charge for transferring or terminating your previous retail contract.

Payment Plans
We will work with you to establish a payment plan that is flexible, affordable and sustainable. We will discuss all payment options outlining their advantages and disadvantages, allowing you to make an informed decision.

Centrepay
If you receive benefits or allowances from Centrelink, you are eligible to use Centrepay as a bill-paying service. Further information can be obtained from Centrelink at www.centrelink.gov.au or by phoning 1800 050 004.

Late Payment Fees and Security Deposits
You will not be charged late payment fees, and security deposits will not be requested.

Disconnection
We will not disconnect you while you are actively participating in our hardship program.

Exiting Hardship Plans
When you graduate from our hardship program you will be returned to our normal billing cycles. You can choose to transfer out of your payment plan. If you fail to adhere to your payment plan agreement or choose to change retailer, you will be removed from the hardship program.

Smart Energy Use
Wise, efficient energy use will reduce your bill. We can inform you of simple strategies to reduce your energy use, and we can send you an energy efficiency kit, which contains simple tools to allow you to undertake your own home energy assessments.

Energy Auditing
Energy audits can pinpoint problems with energy use. We can offer a free home auditing service, in states where there is a regulatory requirement, if you are in our hardship program and:

- You have high, unexplained bills
- You or your financial counsellor expresses concern about the energy efficiency of your home and/or appliances
- Our EnergyAssist team thinks you might benefit from an audit

Appliance Assistance
In states where there is a regulatory requirement, an energy auditor can recommend an appliance be replaced if it is contributing to higher-than-usual consumption.

Concessions, Grants and Support
Our EnergyAssist team will inform you about government concessions and payment assistance programs. Home auditors can also inform you about grants, concessions, rebates and capital goods assistance programs.

Financial Counselling Services
Financial counsellors can assist you to manage your finances more effectively, and can represent you in discussions with EnergyAustralia. We will refer you to an accredited financial counselling agency that can provide their services at no cost to you.

Financial counsellors can contact EnergyAustralia's EnergyAssist team directly from:

- 8.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday on 1300 723 492 for NSW customers
- 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday on 1800 558 643 for Vic, ACT, SA and Qld customers

Pre-payment Meters
If you have a pre-payment meter (PPM), we encourage you to let us know if you are experiencing financial hardship and we will change your meter to a standard meter, at no cost to you.

Customers from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds

If you have difficulty understanding English, an interpreter service is available, at no cost to you, on 131 450.

Contact Us
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- **8.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday on 1300 723 492 for NSW customers**
- **8am to 5pm Monday to Friday on 1800 558 643 for Vic, ACT, SA and Qld customers**

A copy of EnergyAustralia's *Hardship Policy* can be downloaded from www.energyaustralia.com.au. Alternatively, a free copy can be posted upon request by contacting EnergyAustralia on 131 535 131 502 (NSW) or 133 466 (Vic, ACT, SA and Qld).