

# Energy Advice Pack

## Support and information about your energy use<sup>1</sup>

### Seek assistance from your energy provider

If you are having trouble paying your 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. Energy companies also have to provide individually tailored programs if households are experiencing longer term financial difficulties affording their energy.

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

- How frequently households must 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 trouble 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

ActewAGL 13 12 93

AGL 131 245

Australian Power & Gas 133 298

Country Energy 13 23 56

Dodo Power & Gas 133 636

Energy Australia 1800 440 924

Lumo Energy 1300 11 5866

Momentum Energy 1800 794 824

Origin Energy 132 463

Powerdirect 1300 307 966

Red Energy 131 806

Sanctuary Energy 1800 109 099

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<sup>1</sup> This information has been developed jointly between St Vincent de Paul and AGL Energy for all energy users (not just AGL customers) in New South Wales 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

NSW energy concessions are administered by the Department of Planning & Environment, Resources & Energy, and delivered by energy retailers.

Customers who are assessed by the Commonwealth Government as having low income and meet relevant criteria to qualify for a concession card.

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 NSW, customers must meet the following criteria:

- > Is a NSW resident
- > 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 NSW:

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 – Low Income Household Rebate

The Low-Income Household Rebate provides eligible customers with a rebate of \$285 a year on their electricity bills or \$313.50 a year to eligible long-term residents of residential communities (caravan and mobile home parks) and retirement villages who receive electricity bills from their community operators.

The rebate is paid in instalments through each electricity bill. The exact amount of the rebate paid on each bill will depend on the number of days in each billing period.

The Low-Income Household Rebate is intended to assist eligible customers with all their household energy costs (gas and electricity) but is applied on the electricity bill only.

## NSW Gas Rebate

The NSW Gas Rebate provides eligible customers with a rebate of \$110 a year on their gas bills.

The rebate is paid in instalments through each gas bill. The exact amount of the rebate paid on each bill will depend on the number of days in each billing period.

The NSW Gas Rebate is intended to assist eligible customers with all their household energy costs (gas and electricity) but is applied on the gas bill only.

## Electricity – Family Energy Rebate

The NSW Government's Family Energy Rebate helps NSW family households to pay their electricity bills. Non-concession card holders who are not currently receiving the Low-Income Household Rebate are eligible for \$180 each financial year.

Concession card holders who are currently receiving the Low-Income Household Rebate are eligible for \$20 each financial year.

### *Eligibility Requirements:*

To be eligible for the Family Energy Rebate, you must:

- > Be eligible for the Federal Government's Family Tax Benefit A or B at any time during the previous financial year, and have received a relevant payment; and
- > Be a NSW resident; and
- > Have your name listed on electricity bills from an electricity retailer, solely or jointly or be a resident of a caravan or mobile home park and receive electricity bills from a park operator. If you live in an on-supplied residential community, retirement village or strata scheme the rebate is up to \$198.

Rebate will appear as a credit on electricity bills once, for each financial year. When the credit appears on the electricity bill will depend on the billing cycle of the electricity retailer.

For more information and to apply visit <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-family-energy-rebate-retail-customers> or call the NSW Energy Information Line: 137 788.

## Electricity - Medical Energy Rebate

### *Support available:*

The rebate is for eligible customers who have the inability to self-regulate body temperature when exposed to extreme temperatures. It is associated with certain medical conditions such as Parkinson's disease and Multiple Sclerosis.

- > The Rebate provides \$285 a year to eligible customers who hold an electricity account with an electricity retailer of their choice; or,
- > \$313.50 a year to eligible residents of on-supplied residential communities, retirement villages and strata schemes.

### *Eligibility required:*

To be eligible for the Medical Energy Rebate you need to:

- > be resident in New South Wales; and
- > be a long term resident of an on-supplied residential community, or a resident of an on-supplied retirement village, or a resident of an on-supplied strata scheme; and whose name appears on the electricity account for supply to his or her principal place of residence; and
- > submit a valid application form as provided by the Department of Planning and Environment (the Department), which will be made available to customers on the Department's website, duly signed by a registered medical practitioner (who is not the applicant) to verify that either the customer named on the bill or anyone residing at the residence has an inability to self-regulate body temperature; meet at least one Primary Qualifying Condition and at least one Secondary Qualifying condition and
- > hold either a:
  - Pensioner Concession Card issued by the DHS/DVA; or
  - DHS Health Care Card; or
  - DVA Gold Card.

To apply for the Rebate, eligible customers should submit their signed Medical Energy Rebate Application Form to your energy supplier. You can obtain a form at:

<https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-medical-energy-rebate-retail-customers>

## Energy Accounts Payment Assistance Scheme (EAPA)

*Support available:*

The EAPA scheme helps financially disadvantaged people experiencing difficulty paying their electricity or gas bill because of a crisis or emergency situation. The scheme ensures people stay connected to essential services during a financial crisis, and is not available on an ongoing basis. EAPA vouchers, each worth \$50, are sent to the retailer electronically by the EAPA provider and the vouchers are paid to the customer's account.

Customers should first contact their energy retailer to determine if they can offer them a payment plan that suits their financial situation. If a customer requires further assistance they should contact a community welfare organisation (such as Salvation Army, Anglicare, Wesley Mission etc) or the NSW Government and make an appointment to be assessed for EAPA. Energy suppliers cannot disconnect a customer who is awaiting an EAPA assessment.

## Electricity – Life Support

*Support available:*

The life support rebate provides assistance with the energy costs associated with the operation of certain eligible life support machines.

The life support concession is applied on each quarterly electricity bill; customers do not need to be a concession card holder to be eligible for the life support rebate in NSW.

Customers may be entitled to more than one rebate depending on the patient's medical conditions. For this to occur, all machines prescribed by the patient's doctor must be included in the application. Rebates are calculated on a daily basis and are applied to each bill.

*Eligibility required:*

- > The account holder or another occupant in your household requires one or more of the eligible medical equipment above to sustain that person's life; and
- > You have an application form signed by your doctor to verify the need for specific in-house medical equipment.

*Eligible equipment:*

<b>List of Approved Life Support Equipment</b>	
<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Daily rate</b>
<b>Positive Airways Pressure (PAP) Device</b>	<b>\$0.36 for less than 24-hour usage \$0.71 for 24-hour usage</b>
<b>Enteral feeding pump</b>	<b>\$0.44</b>
<b>Phototherapy equipment</b>	<b>\$3.68</b>
<b>Home dialysis</b>	<b>\$1.54</b>
<b>Ventilators</b>	<b>\$3.68</b>
<b>Oxygen concentrators</b>	<b>\$1.85 for less than 24-hour usage \$3.11 for 24-hour usage</b>
<b>Total Parenteral Nutrition (TPN) pump</b>	<b>\$0.84</b>
<b>External heart pump</b>	<b>\$0.11</b>
<b>Power wheelchairs for quadriplegics</b>	<b>\$0.30</b>

## **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](https://my.gov.au).

## 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 20°C. Every degree above this could add 10% to home heating costs and a saving of up to 7% of annual energy usage bill.

3. 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.

4. 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.

## 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.



A range of information is available.

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

Call the info line 1300 22 4636 or go to [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://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 New South Wales 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.cancernsw.org.au](http://www.cancernsw.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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.thesmithfamily.com.au)