



Payment assistance and rebates

USE THIS FACT SHEET IF YOU:

- can't afford to pay all of your bill by the due date
- are in short-term, unforeseen financial difficulties
- are a pensioner
- rely on electricity to manage medical conditions
- need help managing a financial crisis
- want to save money on your next bill



Many people contact Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ) because they have problems paying their bill.

If you cannot afford to pay your bill, contact your retailer immediately to find out what assistance they can provide so you can avoid disconnection or water restriction.

PAYMENT PLANS

A payment plan allows you to pay an agreed amount regularly towards your bill.

You should only agree to an amount you can realistically afford because if you break the payment plan you can be disconnected or restricted. Your retailer can only refuse a payment plan if you have defaulted on previous arrangements.

If you and your retailer cannot agree on the amount of your payment plan, contact EWOQ for assistance.

CENTREPAY

Centrepay allows you to automatically deduct an amount from your Centrelink pension or benefit payment into your energy account.

By making a payment every fortnight, you will reduce the amount owing when you receive your next bill, making it easier to pay.

FINANCIAL HARDSHIP PROGRAMS

If you are experiencing extreme difficulty paying a bill due to unforeseen circumstances, such as loss of income or illness, a financial hardship program can help you pay off your debt through an affordable payment plan.

Hardship programs can also help you be more energy or water efficient and reduce costs in the future.

Contact your retailer for more information.

HOME ENERGY EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE SCHEME

The HEEA scheme is a one-off payment to help people experiencing a short-term financial crisis or unforeseen emergency and cannot pay their energy bill.

Contact your energy retailer for more information.

PENSIONER REBATES

Electricity and gas rebates are available to eligible pensioners, holders of a Queensland Government Senior Card or Pensioner Concession Card. Water rebates are available to eligible pensioners in south east Queensland who hold a Pensioner Concession Card or Gold Card. The annual rebate is applied to your account.

Contact your energy or water retailer to apply for a rebate.

MEDICAL CONCESSIONS

The Electricity Life Support Concession Scheme offers eligible users of oxygen concentrators and kidney dialysis machines a concession per month (paid quarterly) to assist with meeting electricity costs.

The Medical Cooling and Heating Concession helps low-income Queenslanders with a specific medical condition to assist with electricity costs for running air-conditioners to help regulate body temperature.

Contact the Department of Communities on 13 13 04 for more information.

Dialysis patients in south east Queensland may be entitled to a rebate from their water supplier. Contact your water retailer for more information.

DROUGHT RELIEF

Farmers who are customers of Ergon Energy may seek relief from electricity charges if they are in a drought declared area or if their property is individually drought declared by the Queensland Government.

Call Ergon Energy on 13 10 46 for more information.

HELP FOR MANAGING A FINANCIAL CRISIS

Financial counselling helps people who are in financial difficulty and can help you manage a short term crisis and plan to prevent a future one. Financial counsellors can help you remain independent and take full control of your own financial affairs.

Financial counsellors can:

- help you organise your financial information, design a personal budget and suggest ways to change and improve your financial situation
- assess your eligibility for government assistance
- negotiate with your creditors
- explain debt recovery procedures, bankruptcy and other alternatives
- refer you to other services, for example, gambling support, family support, personal counselling or community legal aid.

To find a financial counsellor in your area, call the Financial Counselling Association of Queensland on (07) 3321 3192.

SAVING MONEY ON YOUR BILL

Being energy and water efficient can save you money and can help ease the burden on the environment. Below are some tips to help you save money on your next bill.

- If you're not using it, turn it off
- Buy energy and water efficient products
- Take shorter showers
- Use energy-efficient light bulbs
- Set your air conditioner at 24 degrees
- Switch to off-peak electricity where possible
- Insulate your home
- Use appliances such as dishwashers, washing machines and dryers only when full
- Check for water and gas leaks.

TIPS FOR RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

- 1 If you have any problems with your energy or water company, contact them first and explain your situation. Keep records of letters, names, times and dates.
- 2 If the call centre staff can't help you, ask to speak to a supervisor.
- 3 If the problem is still not fixed, contact EWOQ to make a complaint.

ABOUT EWOQ

Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ) is a free, fair and independent dispute resolution service for residential and small business energy customers across Queensland and water customers in south east Queensland.



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QUEENSLAND

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