




Energy bill support for Victorians

What you need to know

Information for consumers – March 2023



Overview

	<p>This information details what support is available to help you manage and pay your energy bills.</p> <p>Victoria has one of the most comprehensive sets of energy consumer protections and assistance programs in Australia.</p> <p>These include protections for residential and small business customers when it comes to energy retail price changes, and energy retailers communicating with you about what offer is best for you.</p> <p>There are also protections in place for consumers if an energy retailer were to go out of business. You will not lose access to or continuity of gas or electricity supply.</p>
	<p>The Essential Services Commission regulates Victoria's energy market in the long-term interest of Victorian energy consumers.</p> <p>This includes overseeing energy retailers' compliance with obligations that are designed to protect you when energy retail prices change, or when you are experiencing bill stress.</p> <p>We want Victorians to be aware of and access the assistance they are entitled to and support that is available.</p>
	<p>If you're having trouble paying your energy bills, you are entitled to assistance from your retailer. Don't wait, contact your energy retailer as soon as possible to get help.</p> <p>Ask your retailer about what concessions, rebates, utility relief grants or payment plans are available.</p> <p>Your retailer must include 'best offer' information on your electricity bills at least once every three months and gas bills at least once every four months. Check the 'best offer' message on your bill to see if you are on the best price.</p>



Other ways to keep energy costs down include tracking and adjusting energy usage, and installing energy efficiency lighting and appliances, and rooftop solar panels.

Energy retailer obligations in Victoria – consumer rights and protections

Current as at 15 March 2023

Your Victorian electricity retailer must offer you, if you are a residential or small business customer, the current Victorian Default Offer. This is a simple and trusted electricity price that is set by the Essential Services Commission, not energy companies. It provides Victorians access to a fair electricity deal even if they are unable or unwilling to engage in the retail market.

Energy retailers can only increase prices at specific times to provide you with certainty about prices (unless you are on an exempt market contract and have explicitly agreed to different arrangements). When this occurs depends on whether you are on a standing or market contract. For Victorians on market contracts that are not fixed term contracts, the next time prices may be increased is 1 August 2023. Retailers must give customers a bill change alert at least five business days before the price or benefit change occurs. This bill change alert must include information about whether you are on your retailer's 'best offer'.

When a fixed term retail contract is due to end, retailers must notify residential and small business customers approximately one month beforehand and advise customers of their options. This includes advice as to the availability of the Victorian Default Offer for electricity customers or a standing offer for gas customers. Every gas retailer in Victoria is required to make a standing offer available to residential and small business customers that provides a basic service.

All Victorian energy retailers are required to carry out 'best offer checks' and advise residential and small business customers if they have another offer that may save the customer money. Your retailer must include 'best offer' information on your electricity bills at least once every three months and gas bills at least once every four months. Check the 'best offer' message on your bill to see if you are on the best price.



Energy retailer obligations in Victoria – consumer rights and protections

If you are a residential customer experiencing bill stress, ask your energy retailer for help and the energy retailer must offer you assistance – this might include giving you an extension to a bill payment due date or allowing you to pay for energy in advance if that is more appropriate.

If you are eligible for a utility relief grant, your retailer must complete an application for a utility relief grant on your behalf at your request. This is a grant offered by the Victorian Government to provide relief of up to \$1,300 to customers with a pensioner concession card, health care card, veterans' affairs gold card or who are from a low income household.

When your contract comes to an end, residential and small business customers may be automatically moved on to a retailer's Victorian Default Offer or standing offer for gas. If that occurs and you continue to pay, the retailer cannot disconnect you simply because the previous contract has ended.

If you have a complaint about your retailer, consider getting in touch with the Energy and Water Ombudsman on 1800 500 509. This is a free and impartial dispute resolution service available to Victorian energy consumers.

Contact us

Got a question? Follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#), or view our contact details: <https://www.esc.vic.gov.au/contact-us>.



Government assistance programs available to eligible Victorians

Current as at 15 March 2023

- [\\$250 Power Saving Bonus](#) – Victorians can access a one-off \$250 payment to help with their energy bills. Visit the [Victorian Energy Compare website](#) to see if you're eligible.
- [Victorian Energy Compare](#) – Victorian Energy Compare is the Victorian Government's free, independent energy price comparison tool to help you find the best energy offers for you.
- [Annual electricity concession](#) – talk to your energy retailer and provide your concession card details to receive the annual electricity concession.
- [Energy Assistance Program](#) – free tailored energy affordability support for households at risk of financial hardship.
- [Life support concession](#) – if you are a concession card holder using a life-support machine at home you could be eligible for concessions on your electricity and water bills.
- [Victorian Energy Upgrades program](#) – households and businesses can receive rebates and discounts on energy-saving products that help cut power bills and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

For more information on what energy concessions and benefits are available to eligible Victorians, visit <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/energy>