

Regulator closely monitoring energy debt levels

The average debt of household electricity customers receiving help from energy companies peaked in April 2021 at its highest level since the payment difficulty safety net was introduced in January 2019 but has since fallen slightly.

[New data released today](#) by the Essential Services Commission shows at the end of June 2021, 60,000 electricity and 43,000 gas residential customers were receiving tailored assistance from their retailer to help pay their bills.

Average debt for those on tailored assistance peaked at \$1142 in April but fell to \$1097 in June.

The commission's executive director of energy Sarah Sheppard says Victorians receiving assistance appear to be falling further behind in their bills compared to two years ago.

"The number of customers receiving assistance is relatively stable or dropping, but the average amount owed is now higher than prior to the pandemic.

"The ongoing economic impact of the pandemic is being felt across of community and we will continue to monitor debt levels," she said.

Ms Sheppard says with thousands of energy customers struggling it is even more important the commission monitor the behaviour of energy companies.

"One hundred and twenty-five penalty notices were paid by Simply Energy after two external door-to-door sales agents allegedly impersonated customers and used fake names to switch hundreds of customers to new energy contracts without their consent," she said.

The quarterly report also shows:

- Between 1 April 2021 and 30 June 2021, the commission issued two new electricity licences (one generation and one retail licence).
- Disconnection levels from March 2021 remained low in line with our expectations during the stay-at-home orders in Victoria.

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