

Regulator 'pleased' at water businesses' support for households affected by pandemic

With more households getting help to pay their water bills, the regulator says it's pleased with how water businesses are supporting customers affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

[New data](#) from the Essential Services Commission shows while the number of customers in hardship programs increased by 438 or 1.8 per cent in October, the rate of growth slowed considerably in the past month.

Essential Services Commission water director Marcus Crudden says between April and August, the number of households in water hardship programs increased by 2823 or 14 per cent over four months.

"The monthly growth rate peaked at 5 per cent in September but fell to less than 2 per cent in October," he said.

Mr Crudden says at the same time, the number of customers applying for utility relief grants and this is a good sign.

"Since the beginning of the pandemic, Victoria's water businesses have been reaching out to customers to ensure they are aware of existing and new support programs," he said.

In August, the commission [updated its customer service code](#) to ensure households and small businesses affected by the pandemic have access to flexible payment options and hardship assistance in line with [principles](#) developed by the National Cabinet.

The latest data for October also shows:

- fewer customers applied for government Utility Relief Grants during October compared to September (weekly application rate was 492, down from 775 in September)
- the number of customers on restricted supply continues to fall, down to 128 customers from 212 in April.

About the data: data is reported weekly by water businesses and is not audited by the commission. We are collecting a small subset of the annual data that is included in our annual water performance report.

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