

## Safety net for Victorians suffering energy bill stress

The state's energy regulator has reassured Victorians experiencing energy bill stress as a result of summer bushfires and the coronavirus outbreak that help is available.

The Essential Services Commission has launched a campaign to inform customers across the state about the support energy retailers must offer that provides a safety net for Victorians who are facing payment difficulties.

Energy companies are required to support customers avoid getting into debt and offer advice and assistance for lowering their energy costs.

Commission chairperson Kate Symons says one of the most important consumer protections in Victoria's energy rules is the requirement that retailers offer affordable payment arrangements.

"After a tough summer and the new challenge we now face as a community, Victorians should know help is available if they are having trouble paying their energy bills.

"Customers can put their debt on hold for six months if they can't afford to pay for their ongoing power usage or they can be given a plan to pay off their energy bills for up to two years."

### Key energy protections for Victorians

- Flexible payment options
- Debt repayments put on hold for six months for households who cannot pay for their ongoing usage
- No disconnection for electricity or gas customers who receive bill assistance or participate in payment plans
- No debt collection for households who receive bill assistance

Ms Symons says energy businesses can also go beyond their mandated obligations with some offering to waive debt or part fees and charges to assist struggling customers.

"It's pleasing to see some retailers have made commitments to supporting customers at this time but I encourage Victorians to know their rights under our payment difficulty framework," she said.

For more information about your energy rights visit [www.esc.vic.gov.au/its-your-energy](http://www.esc.vic.gov.au/its-your-energy)

**For further information call: Michelle Bryne, Head of Strategic Communication 0437 677 385**

To keep up to date, visit us at [esc.vic.gov.au](http://esc.vic.gov.au) or follow us on LinkedIn and Twitter