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# Coronavirus update

**02 April 2020**

*Corporate*

*A message from our chair, Kate Symons*

The coronavirus pandemic is challenging our community in new ways. Many consumers and businesses are experiencing financial distress and uncertainty - and the broader impact on our lives will not be known for some time.

As providers of essential services, the businesses we regulate are critical for ensuring the Victorian community can continue to function during and after this pandemic.

I'm pleased to see that many regulated businesses are rising to the challenge, finding ways to continue to provide essential services to the community including across the energy and water sectors. The efforts of industry are an important part of the response to the current challenges and I acknowledge the positive and proactive actions that many are taking.

As a regulator, we continue to communicate and work with businesses for the benefit of the wider community.

We have written to energy and water businesses, offering our support as they work to maintain services.

We have reminded them of their obligations to help customers who are having trouble paying their bills. Ensuring those sectors can cope with an expected increase in the number of households and small businesses who need help with their bills is an immediate focus for us.

We have asked distribution networks to be particularly mindful that interruptions to energy supply (e.g. for planned maintenance) will be more disruptive than usual due to the high number of people working from home or housebound due to coronavirus restrictions.

We have worked with the government to reduce contact between Victorian Energy Upgrades providers and the public by restricting some activities under the energy efficiency scheme.

And we will continue to work with our other regulated sectors like local government and transport to consider the immediate and long-term impact of this pandemic on Victorian consumers.

We are also talking to the consumer and community sectors and financial and family violence counsellors, to ensure vulnerable Victorians, including those who have lost their jobs or are more vulnerable due to social isolation are being considered in our regulatory work.

At the same time, we are asking the public to be aware of the need for energy networks and water businesses to continue with maintenance and repairs. This means workers will need to visit properties and work in the streets to keep our systems operating – to keep essential services operating for all.

We appreciate the ongoing work of those staff for the benefit of all Victorian consumers.

As we saw during the recent bushfires, when our community pulls together, we can withstand the most testing of times.

## **We are still here – not in the office but still focused on customer protection**

The commission remains very much 'open for business' but like many, we are doing our part by working from home until further notice.

We have a strong business continuity focus, but we are adapting our work plan to ensure the protection of Victoria's consumers remains the priority throughout this pandemic, whilst acknowledging the impact on regulated businesses.

Our new reality might mean it will take a little longer to reach us or for us to respond, but we will respond. You can [contact us](#) – on the phone, send an email or complete an online form – we're still here, working for you.

Kate Symons

Chair

## For general enquiries

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You can also find us on [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

## For VEU enquiries

Phone: [\(+61 3\) 9032 1310](tel:+61390321310) or submit a [contact form](#).

## For media enquiries

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