

Protection for water customers suffering financial stress after fires and coronavirus

16 April 2020

Water

The state's independent economic regulator has reassured water customers help is available if they have trouble paying their bills due to the summer bushfires and the coronavirus pandemic.

The Essential Services Commission sets requirements for water businesses to offer customers support if they are experiencing payment difficulty.

Commission chairperson Kate Symons says it is important customers know that help is available, particularly at this challenging time.

“Water businesses must prioritise care for vulnerable customers who are experiencing financial stress.

“Several water businesses have already let us know how they are responding to meet the crisis, and we acknowledge the positive steps they are continuing to take to keep services operational, protect the wellbeing of staff, and look after customers' needs,” she said.

Under the commission's customer protection codes, [water businesses are required to:](#)

- provide support to customers through affordable payment plans and payment extensions
- exempting hardship customers from water restrictions, legal action, debt recovery costs and interest on overdue amounts
- have processes to identify and respond to customer's experiencing financial hardship

- support customers affected by family violence including providing access to financial support and referrals to specialist services.

The commission has written to water businesses, indicating its expectation they may need to go beyond minimum requirements at this time.

Under the [customer codes](#), water businesses are also required to provide customers with information about how they can reduce water use as well as details about government assistance that might be available to them.

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Water businesses must let you know what help is available if you find yourself struggling to pay your water bills.

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