

Support for energy customers during the pandemic

30 June 2020

Electricity and gas

Victorian small businesses and households experiencing payment difficulties during the coronavirus pandemic stand to benefit from rule changes to be proposed by the state energy regulator.

The Essential Services Commission has published today a draft set of measures aimed at helping customers experiencing financial difficulties to pay their electricity and gas bills.

Proposed measures include giving small businesses an entitlement to access flexible payment options and advice on better priced offers.

Commission chief executive officer John Hamill says the targeted changes, in place for six months, would provide small businesses a safety net as they navigate the road to recovery.

“Small business owners have been doing it tough and there is currently no minimum standard of support from retailers if they face stress brought on by energy bills.

“We have recognised a gap in protections in the energy market for small businesses and Victorians seeking assistance, these proposed reforms offer a safety net for those who need it most,” he said.

Victorian consumers who need financial support will also benefit under a temporary rule change that would make energy retailers proactively offer price checks for all customers on [tailored assistance](#).

Under the changes, retailers would also support eligible customers applying for a government [Utility Relief Grant](#)

Assistance is [currently available](#) for Victorians experiencing bill stress through the [Payment Difficulty Framework](#) as well as reforms such as the [Victorian Default Offer](#) and [energy best offer](#).

From 1 July 2020 pay on time discounts [will be capped](#) while price changes on energy deals will be [limited to every 12 months](#) and must maintain any discounts, credits or rebates for the entire length of a customer's contract.

Victorians can have their say on the coronavirus reform draft decision on [Engage Victoria](#) with [consultation open until 14 July 2020](#).

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