

Working with energy to address family violence

30 August 2018

Electricity and gas

Around 100 representatives from energy businesses and the community sector are in Melbourne today to talk about providing better support for people experiencing family violence.

The forum, hosted by the state's energy regulator, signals the start of work aimed at ensuring energy retailers support customers and staff experiencing family violence.

The Hon. Robin Scott, Minister for Finance, will be on hand to launch the project which stems from a recommendation of the 2017 Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Essential Services Commission chairman Ron Ben-David says the royal commission highlighted how perpetrators of family violence use utility bills as a form of punishment and control.

"From the royal commission, we also heard how some perpetrators use information provided by utility companies to track down family members who are in hiding," he said.

A recommendation from the royal commission required the commission to update energy and water service codes, and develop family violence guidelines for industry, to address issues of economic abuse linked to utilities.

Last year, the commission worked with the state's water businesses to become the first economic regulator in Australia to formalise a response to family violence.

Dr Ben-David says the commission is taking what it has learned to develop practical ways energy businesses can provide support to their customers and staff.

"Among other things, this is likely to include ways to prevent disclosure of private customer information to perpetrators and help with accessing payment difficulty programs."

The commission will be consulting extensively with the sector and specialist family violence support services over the next six months to finalise the new guidelines for energy retailers.

Find out more about [the commission's work to address family violence](#).

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