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Essential News

Latest news from the Essential Services Commission
July 2021

Welcome to Essential News, our regular update on key decisions, releases and events from the Essential Services Commission.

Hundreds caught up in alleged 'phoney accent' energy switch

Simply Energy has paid penalties totalling \$2.5 million after two external door-to-door sales agents allegedly used phoney accents and fake names to switch hundreds of customers to new energy contracts without their consent.

We issued 125 penalty notices to Simply Energy after the agents allegedly impersonated customers consenting to the switch in phone calls to the company.

[Find out more →](#)



Increased retailer costs mean small rise in default electricity

Water bills to fall across Victoria in year ahead

We have confirmed the prices to apply from 1 July for the state's 15 water businesses providing urban water and sewerage services.

Most Victorian households will enjoy a drop in water bills for the year ahead, with bills to fall by \$33 on average in Melbourne and \$7 in regional Victoria.

[View average prices for all 15 water businesses →](#)



Breaking down barriers to essential services

price

Households on the Victorian default offer will see a small increase of around \$4 a month from 1 September.

We released our final decision to vary the Victorian default offer to take account of a recent decision by the Australian Energy Regulator to allow Victoria's distribution businesses to increase their network charges from mid-year.

[Find out more →](#)

Accident towing and storage fees to be reviewed

The amount Victorians pay in towing and storage fees after a motor accident, within Melbourne and the Mornington Peninsula, is [set to be reviewed](#).

We have released a consultation paper, which provides an opportunity for the industry and service users to provide feedback on our approach to reviewing fees and changes since the last review, in 2018.

[Find out more and have your say at Engage Victoria →](#)

Water price review 2023

We are preparing guidance for our 2023 water price review that sets out what 15 Victorian water businesses must include in their price submissions late next year.

We are consulting with the water sector, consumer representative groups, government departments and other stakeholders to prepare our guidance paper. Last week commission staff held a workshop with water businesses to test some of our proposals.

Thousands of Victorians struggle to access and engage with essential services due to barriers such as financial stress, family violence, and conflicting information.

To address this experience, we have developed our ['Getting to fair' strategy](#), which aims to break down barriers consumers can face when accessing and engaging with essential services.

We will be launching the strategy on 12 August with an online event.

[Register to attend our launch →](#)

Households paying higher energy bills than they should

Victorian consumers are being urged to contact their energy retailers after a new report showed they are needlessly paying too much for their energy bills.

Our latest Victorian energy market update shows about two million Victorian customers could be paying more than they should because they're not on the 'best offer' from their retailer. In March this year alone, 850,000 Victorians who received electricity bills were not on the best deal.

[Read the June Victorian energy market update →](#)

More information will be available soon [on our website](#).

Spotlight on ...

Our energy compliance and enforcement priorities

We have unveiled six energy compliance and enforcement priorities for 2021–22 with a continuing emphasis on consumer protection. The priorities are:

- Ensuring explicit informed consent is obtained before signing a customer to a new deal
- Ensuring disconnections always follow the rules
- Ensuring customers are offered help as required by the payment difficulty framework
- Ensuring customers are billed appropriately for their energy use
- Ensuring embedded network operators comply with the Energy Retail Code
- Protecting people experiencing vulnerability especially those affected by family violence or who rely on energy for their life support.

[Find out more →](#)

Consultation

We're currently seeking feedback on the following documents:

- [Accident towing and storage fees review](#) - closes 6 August
- [Inquiry into Port of Melbourne compliance with pricing order](#) - closes 3 September

[Visit our consultations page →](#)

