

Payment difficulty framework implementation review: early observations

Themes	The extent that consumers receive and access assistance	The timeliness of assistance provided, and levels of arrears	Disconnection levels and how consumers are exiting assistance
<p style="text-align: center;">Early observations</p>	<p>1. More consumers are receiving payment assistance compared to pre-2019.</p>	<p>4. Average arrears levels have increased, particularly for consumers who cannot pay on-going usage.</p>	<p>7. Disconnections have reduced.</p>
	<p>2. 69,000 consumers received utility relief grants, and a third of tailored assistance consumers (who cannot pay ongoing use), are not receiving concessions.</p>	<p>5. Consumers are entering tailored assistance with already high arrears.</p>	<p>8. 1 in 2 consumers disconnected did not receive assistance in the six months prior.</p>
	<p>3. In 2019, around 120,000 reminder notices and 50,000 disconnection warning notices were sent every quarter. Around 5,400 consumers were disconnected each quarter.</p>	<p>6. In 2020-21, 65% of disconnected electricity consumers owed more than \$1,000.</p>	<p>9. Reasons for exiting payment assistance varies between retailers.</p>
	<p>Consumer insights indicate some mixed results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improved retailer assistance to consumers and a reduction in pressure on consumers to accept unaffordable payment plans many consumers believe they have not received appropriate retailer assistance, or have been handled inappropriately consumers experiencing vulnerability appear to be disproportionately affected. 		