



Facing *disconnection* or restriction

USE THIS FACT SHEET IF YOU:

- are facing disconnection or restriction
- want to avoid disconnection/restriction
- are wrongfully disconnected/restricted
- need to be reconnected

Unfortunately, many people can't afford to pay their bills and may face electricity or gas disconnection or water flow restriction because of this. It's important to know help is available.

WHEN YOU CAN BE DISCONNECTED

You can be disconnected for any of the following reasons:

- your retailer has the right to disconnect under your contract
- you fail to pay a bill, security deposit or for connection services to your premise
- you don't provide safe access to meters for three consecutive scheduled meter readings
- health and safety
- in an emergency or at the request of police
- you provide false information in order to be connected
- you don't provide acceptable identification when requested by your retailer
- illegal activities
- you cause damage to the distributor's equipment or interference to a third party's supply.

However, your retailer must give you fair notice before disconnection can occur.

Reminder notice – gives you five business days after receiving the notice to redress the issue and informs you of the consequences if you don't. Your retailer must endeavour to contact you by phone, mail, email or other approved method.

Disconnection/restriction warning – if you fail to act on the reminder notice, a warning will be sent informing you energy disconnection will occur in five business days or water restriction will occur in 10 business days. Warnings must provide information on how Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ) can help.

WHEN YOU CAN'T BE DISCONNECTED

Water cannot be disconnected for health reasons; instead water flow is severely restricted.

You cannot be disconnected:

- after 3pm on a business day
- on a Friday or the day before a public holiday
- on a weekend or a public holiday
- between 20 and 31 December (inclusive)
- if you, or a member of your household, relies on life support equipment
- the disconnection is under investigation with EWOQ or another dispute resolution organisation.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you have received a disconnection or restriction notice, contact your retailer straight away – they may be able to help you.

If you are having trouble paying your bill, there are a number of things your retailer can do to help:

- offer a payment plan
- inform you of any rebates or concessions you may be entitled to
- provide access to a financial hardship program
- provide information on independent financial counselling
- offer an energy or water audit to identify where you can save money.

If you agree to a payment plan, make sure you're able to meet the repayments or you may be disconnected. Also, your retailer may not agree to a payment plan if you have failed to complete payment plans in the past.

If you can't agree on a payment plan with your retailer, EWOQ may be able to help.

'DEAR OCCUPANT' LETTERS

If energy is used at a property but an account hasn't been opened, the retailer will send any bills, letters or notices addressed to the 'occupant' or 'resident'.

It's important you read these letters as they may be a disconnection warning.

RECONNECTION

You will usually need to pay something towards your bill or organise a payment plan, to establish reconnection or water flow.

You may also be charged a reconnection fee. You will pay more if you want to reconnect outside of business hours.

In addition, you may be required to pay a security deposit. This can be up to 1½ times your estimated quarterly bill or 2½ times your estimated monthly bill.

WRONGFUL ENERGY DISCONNECTION

Sometimes mistakes occur and you may be wrongfully disconnected. If this happens, you may be entitled to a Guaranteed Service Level (GSL) payment if the distributor wrongfully disconnected you when:

- it was not entitled to do so under legislation or a contract
- it failed to comply with the procedures required for disconnection
- the wrong premise was disconnected
- your retailer did not give you a disconnection warning.

Contact your retailer to claim a GSL.

TIPS FOR RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

- 1 If you have any problems with your energy or water company, contact them first and explain your situation. Keep records of letters, names, times and dates.
- 2 If the call centre staff can't help you, ask to speak to a supervisor.
- 3 If the problem is still not fixed, contact EWOQ to make a complaint.

ABOUT EWOQ

Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ) is a free, fair and independent dispute resolution service for residential and small business energy customers across Queensland and water customers in south east Queensland.



energy+water
ombudsman
QUEENSLAND