



# Helping someone with their energy or water problems? **LET'S TALK.**

## What can EWOQ do?

1

Arrange for a hold on an impending disconnection or try to negotiate reconnection

2

Check the retailer has followed the disconnection rules

3

Investigate high bills, help negotiate payment plans, and investigate default listings

4

Provide information about available rebates, concessions and hardship assistance

## Quick tips for community workers:



- 1 You'll need written or verbal permission from your client in order to act on their behalf. We have an EWOQ Authority to Act form available from our website.
- 2 It is not essential to reveal the reasons for your client's financial hardship but it may help when negotiating a payment plan
- 3 If your client can't pay a bill, the sooner they can contact their energy or water retailer the better – this will stop their debt from getting bigger and ensure they stay connected.

### Hardship

Under the National Energy Retail Rules, a retailer must tell anyone identifying as a hardship customer of their Customer Hardship Policy, and provide a copy of it on request at no expense. Under the SEQ Customer Water and Wastewater Code, a retailer must have a hardship policy available to customers who have the intention but not the capacity to pay their bill.

Most retailers have programs to help customers in financial difficulty, which:

- assist customers to stay connected
- offer a tailored payment plan based on the customer's capacity to pay for their energy usage and arrears
- provide energy saving information and audits
- provide information about the Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme (HEEAS).

### Energy disconnection

Electricity and gas can't be disconnected, under the following circumstances:

- someone in the residence is registered for life support equipment
- on a Friday, the weekend, a public holiday, the day before a public holiday, between 20–31 December, or before 8am or after 3pm any other day
- the debt is for less than the minimum disconnection amount
- the customer has lodged a complaint with us that is directly related to the reason for the proposed disconnection.

### Water restriction

Water can't be restricted if the:

- customer's account is less than one month in arrears
- customer has lodged a complaint with us that is directly related to the reason for the proposed disconnection.

### If your client is facing disconnection or restriction:

- contact their retailer to discuss a payment plan and ask about their customer assistance program
- check that your client is receiving the rebates and concessions they're entitled to
- refer them to a financial counsellor to help work out an affordable payment plan
- contact us if you're not able to negotiate an affordable payment plan for your client.

### Default listings

Under the Privacy Act 1988, a payment default may be recorded on a credit report if a customer doesn't pay their utility bill of \$150 or more for at least 60 days after it is due.

Contact us to find out more about when defaults can and can't be listed with the credit reporting body.

Contact us  
1800 662 837  
complaints@ewoq.com.au  
www.ewoq.com.au



Energy & Water  
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