



# Energy Advice Pack

## Support and information about your energy use<sup>1</sup>

### Seek assistance from your energy provider

If you are having trouble paying your bill, don't be afraid to call your energy company.

Energy companies must provide assistance programs for households: this includes delivering concessions and assistance for those experiencing payment difficulties. Energy companies also have to provide individually tailored programs if households are experiencing longer term financial difficulties affording their energy.

All companies must provide basic protection for their energy customers. This applies to both electricity and gas. Protections include:

- How frequently households must receive a bill;
- Reminder and other notices;
- Minimum disconnection amounts;
- Minimum payment time prior to disconnection;
- The provision of flexible payment arrangements;
- Information on concessions on bills.

If you are assisting somebody having trouble paying their energy bill, remember you can only call on behalf of another person if you have that person with you at the time of the call. The only other alternative is if that person has given you prior authorisation for you to speak to the company on their behalf.

#### Standard Contact Details

AGL 131 245	Lumo Energy 1300 115 866
Click Energy 1800 775 929	Origin Energy 132 461
Dodo Power & Gas 133 636	Powerdirect 1300 307 966
Energy Australia 133 466	QEnergy 1300 448 535
Ergon Energy 131 046	Sanctuary Energy 1800 109 099

<sup>1</sup> Note this information is updated 6 monthly and may not be the most up to date at the time of reading.

## State Government support programs

*Main types of support available:*

### Electricity – Electricity Rebate

The Queensland Government provides a rebate of \$329.96 (including GST) per year on the cost of electricity supplied to the home of eligible concession card holders.

Rebates are available to people who hold any of the following:

- Pensioner Concession Card
- Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card (and receive the War Widow Pension or special rate TPI Pension)
- Queensland Seniors Card.
- Centrelink Health Care Cards
- Asylum Seeker

The concession is provided if the address the customer is claiming the rebate at is their principal place of residence, and there is no one else living at the residence who receives an income and pays rent who is not a dependant, spouse, de-facto or carer and does not hold a concession card.

Eligible card holders who live in caravan parks or multi-unit residential buildings may be eligible for the electricity rebate if:

- electricity is paid on the basis of individually metered consumption, and
- the owner/proprietor is prepared to seek the electricity rebate on behalf of the resident.

Eligible card holders who satisfy the above conditions and wish to claim the rebate should call their retailer to apply.

### Gas – Reticulated Natural Gas Rebate

Queensland pensioners and seniors may be eligible for the Reticulated Natural Gas Rebate—\$69.73 (including GST) per year.

Rebates are available to people who hold any of the following:

- Pensioner Concession Card
- Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card (and receive the War Widow Pension or special rate TPI Pension)
- Queensland Seniors Card.

The concession is provided if the address the customer is claiming the rebate at is their principal place of residence, and there is no one else living at the residence who receives an income and pays rent who is not a dependant, spouse, de-facto or carer and does not hold a concession card.

If you live in a caravan park or multi-unit residential building (e.g. nursing homes), you must also show that the:

- gas is paid on the basis of individually metered consumption, and
- owner/proprietor is prepared to seek the Reticulated Natural Gas Rebate on your behalf.

## **Electricity – Medical Cooling and Heating Electricity Concession**

The Medical Cooling and Heating Electricity Concession assists with electricity costs for people who have a chronic medical condition, such as multiple sclerosis, autonomic system dysfunction, significant burns or a severe inflammatory skin condition, which is aggravated by changes in temperature, the rebate of \$329.96 (including GST) per year is paid to eligible recipients directly by the Department of Communities.

*To apply for the Medical Cooling and Heating Electricity concession customers must meet both a primary and secondary qualifying condition and complete an application form that is signed by their medical practitioner.*

*The concession is available to residents of group homes, residential parks and unit complexes.*

To find out about eligibility requirements and information on how to apply, customers need to contact Department of Communities on 13 74 68 or email [concessions@smartservice.qld.gov.au](mailto:concessions@smartservice.qld.gov.au)

## **Electricity Life Support Concession**

The Electricity Life Support Concession Scheme is a monthly concession to assist eligible users of an oxygen concentrator or kidney dialysis machine with meeting their electricity costs. A concession of \$54.48 per month is paid for oxygen concentrators and \$36.48 per month for kidney dialysis machines.

The concession is paid quarterly to seriously ill people who use home-based life support systems, provided they have been medically assessed in accordance with the eligibility criteria determined by Queensland Health. Eligibility to receive the concession is also dependent on the following conditions:

- oxygen concentrators must be provided rent-free by Queensland Health to patients who hold an eligible concession card and meet the eligibility criteria of the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme
- kidney dialysis machines must be provided rent-free by Queensland Health to patients based on clinical needs and supplied through Queensland hospitals.

Full eligibility requirements for the concession are outlined on the application form which is sent to the applicant within 14 working days of receiving their machine.

## **Electricity & gas – Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme (HEEAS)**

- The Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme provides one-off emergency assistance to low-income households. To be eligible for assistance, households must have experienced a short-term financial crisis or unforeseen emergency, within the past 12 months, limiting their ability to pay their current electricity and/or reticulated natural gas account. Assistance of up to \$720 can only be provided once in a 12 month period and may only be provided for two consecutive years.

To be eligible you must:

- hold a current concession card in the name shown on your electricity or reticulated natural gas bill, or
- be part of your energy retailer's hardship program, or
- be on a payment plan with your energy retailer, or
- have an income less than the Australian Government's maximum income rate for part-age pensioners.

Full eligibility details, including the types of emergency situations you might get help for, are available from your energy retailer.

## **Essential Medical Equipment Payment**

*Eligibility required:*

Customers may be eligible for this payment if they or a person in their regular care at home: are covered by a Commonwealth concession card issued by Dept of Human Services or the Department of Veterans' Affairs; or provides proof that the specified equipment, or heating or cooling is medically required, provided as: a certification from a Medical Practitioner, or evidence that the essential medical equipment currently qualifies for assistance under one of the state or territory government schemes, or the Department of Veterans' Rehabilitation Appliance Program.

This option does not apply to medically required heating and cooling. The customer may also need to prove that they, or the person they care for, contributes to the payment of the home energy account.

*Support available:*

The Essential Medical Equipment Payment is an annual \$149 payment to people who experience additional increases in home energy costs from the use of essential medical equipment to manage their disability or medical condition. This payment must be claimed. Customers can apply for the Essential Medical Equipment Payment online at [my.gov.au](http://my.gov.au).

## Energy Saving Tips

**There are also some really simple things you can do around the home to help save energy and money. These are only suggestions and need to be considered if appropriate to the situation.**



- 1.** Cold wash and natural dry and reduce your energy usage charges by up to \$195 per year.

The easiest way to save is to wash your clothes in cold water and dry them using the sun or natural air.

Use the right water level for the right amount of washing.

Do all your ironing at the same time, not only when items are needed.

Household saving: Up to 9% of annual energy usage bill.
- 2.** Watch how long you have your heating and cooling appliances going and how hot or cold the house is, being mindful of this can reduce your energy costs by up to \$357 per year.

For example in summer, set the thermostat on your cooler to 20°C. Every degree below this could add 10% to home cooling costs and a saving of up to 7% of annual energy usage bill.

Switch the heating or cooling off in rooms you're not using.

Seal gaps around windows and doors and use 'door snakes' to stop cold air flow.

Use extra blankets or jumpers instead of electric blankets or heating.
- 3.** Switch off the TV when not watching it as this adds up if you have a few TVs in your home.

TIP - Did you know in one day, a widescreen TV can use more energy than a dishwasher, washing machine and clothes dryer combined? When you leave the room, it's a good idea to switch off the screen, and then turn off at the power point, if need be.
- 4.** If you have a set top box, switch it off when not in use. This applies to other appliances, they cost you money when you are not using them.

TIP - Some simple add on devices add more to your bill. For example a set-top box is usually on stand-by for 40% of the time. If it's not in use, switch it off at the power point and save.
- 5.** Take shorter showers. You could save 0.5kg of greenhouse gases every minute.

Check to see if taps are turned off completely to stop drips.
- 6.** Use a microwave or electric frypan instead of an oven.

Run the dishwasher only when it's full.

Put lids on saucepans for faster cooking.

Using the right-sized saucepan on the right-sized element or burner.

Check your fridge seals and temperature regularly.

7. Replaced incandescent globes with compact fluorescent lights.  
Turn off lights when you leave the room.

## Other available support

Sometimes financial hardship can also be related to other challenges faced by your household. Complementary support measures may be of some assistance. Below is a list of services provided and where to go for help or more information.



The **St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland** helps all people in need, giving them a hand up to make life changing decisions in their lives. In the last financial year, the Society helped more than 300,000 people and distributed \$31.7 million of direct financial assistance to people in need. Local groups called Conferences provide the good works of the Society to the communities in which they operate, and the driving force connecting people in need to Society support services and programs.

The Society also has 129 Centres of Charity including family support (Vinnies Retail Shops) and provides child and family programs, disability services, disaster recovery assistance, food distribution, home visitations, home maintenance and modification program, overseas partnerships, housing and help with homelessness, and youth programs. These programs continue to run thanks to dedication of the Society's Vincentians, volunteers and generous donors.



One of the key roles of **beyondblue** is to produce and refer people to accurate, up to date, easy to read information on depression, anxiety and related disorders. This includes information relating to: Depression, anxiety disorders, postnatal depression, bipolar disorder, diagnosis, treatment, recovery, young people, men, family and friends, chronic illness. A range of information is available.

Call the info line 1300 22 4636 or go to [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)



**Cancer Council** is a national non-government cancer control organisation with the aim of facilitating prevention, research, support and care. Cancer Council Queensland provide support services to provide you with reliable info and practical advice on any type or stage of cancer. They can also link you with a range of support services, for the cost of a local call.

Call the Helpline on 13 11 20 or go to [www.cancerqld.org.au](http://www.cancerqld.org.au)



**CanTeen's** mission is to support, develop and empower young people living with cancer. We do this by providing an Australia-wide peer support network for 12 to 24 year-olds, including: Patients - young people who have been diagnosed with cancer; Siblings & Offspring - young people who have an immediate family member (brother, sister, parent or primary carer) who has been diagnosed with cancer; and Bereaved Siblings & Offspring - young people who have had an immediate family member die from cancer.

Contact CanTeen for information - free call 1800 226 883 or go to [www.canteen.org.au](http://www.canteen.org.au)



**Kids Helpline** is Australia's only free, private and confidential telephone and online counselling service specifically for young people aged between 5 and 25. The service aims to empower young people by assisting them to: Develop options; Identify and understand the consequences of a particular course of action; Facilitate more productive relationships with family and friends, and provide information on local support services.

Kids can call the helpline on free call 1800 55 1800 or go to [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)



**The Smith Family** is a national, independent children's charity helping disadvantaged Australians to get the most out of their education, so they can create better futures for themselves. The Smith Family works with communities across the country to assist Australians living in hardship. Some of their staff and volunteers are based in schools, others work through community organisations and some have their own Smith Family offices.

For more information go to [www.thesmithfamily.com.au](http://www.thesmithfamily.com.au)