

concessions and assistance

The WA Government provides concessions and rebates to eligible electricity customers.

Eligible customers	Subsidy/rebate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centrelink Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card and Commonwealth Seniors Health Card Veteran Affairs Gold Card (War Widow, Dependant, Totally and Permanently Incapacitated) and Pensioner Concession Card 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Account establishment fee rebate Supply charge rebate Reduced meter test fee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centrelink Health Care Card Veterans' Affairs Gold Card (War Widow, Dependent, Totally and Permanently Incapacitated) Pensioner Concession Cards (issued by Centrelink or the Department of Veterans Affairs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dependent child rebate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WA Seniors Card 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supply charge rebate

These concessions are also available to eligible permanent caravan and park home residents.

Other concession and rebates available are:

- **Air Conditioner Rebate:** eligible seniors and customers receiving the dependent child rebate can get a rebate for the cost of using air conditioners in the hottest parts of WA.
- **Life Support Equipment Electricity Subsidy:** assists eligible customers with the cost of using life support equipment at home.
- **Thermoregulatory Dysfunction Subsidy Scheme:** assists eligible customers with the energy costs of using heating and/or cooling equipment at home.

For more information about concessions and rebates, contact your retailer or the Office of Energy.

Payment difficulties and financial hardship

If you are a residential customer having trouble paying your energy bills, your retailer must provide certain assistance. This assistance is only available if you tell your retailer of your situation.

When you tell your retailer that you are having trouble paying a bill, the retailer will decide whether you:

1. Have the ability to pay.
2. Cannot pay due to *payment difficulties*: you are experiencing short-term disadvantage, such as an unexpected event or crisis.
3. Cannot pay because of *financial hardship*: you are experiencing more than short-term disadvantage and cannot pay without affecting your ability to meet basic living needs, such as rent and food.

In assessing your situation, the retailer must consider information provided by yourself or an independent financial counsellor or relevant consumer representative.

If your retailer agrees that you are having *payment difficulties*, they must offer you more time to pay and an instalment plan. You can choose your preferred option. If you choose an instalment plan, your ability to pay must be considered by the retailer when deciding the time period and the number of instalments.

If your retailer determines you are experiencing *financial hardship*, they must:

offer you:

- the same payment arrangements offered to those experiencing payment difficulties; and
- information on help available (e.g. subsidies).



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consider any request from you for a:

- reduction in fees, charges or debt; and
- change in the payment arrangements (e.g. more time to pay, or changes to the instalment plan).

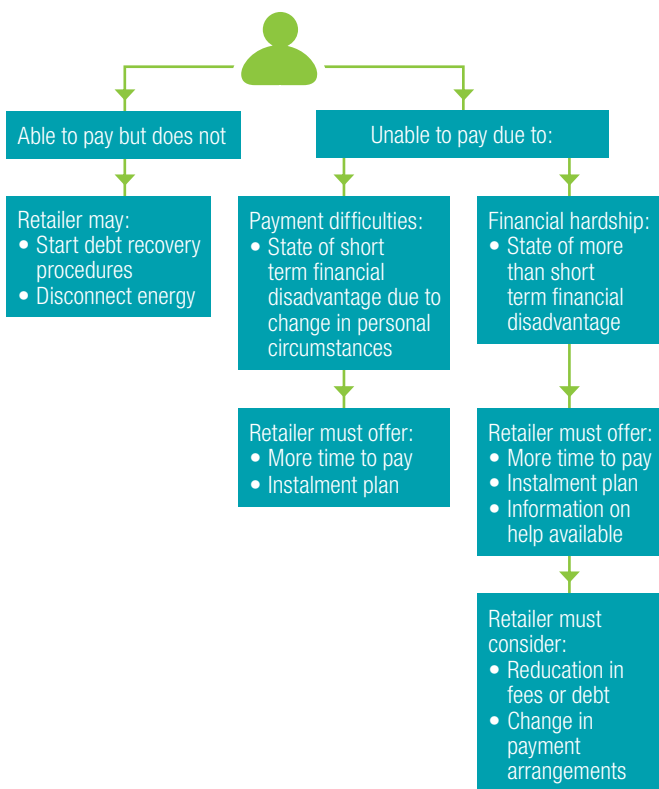
If you are found not to have any payment difficulties or financial hardship, you will not be entitled to any of the assistance measures that the retailer is required to offer.

The retailer's normal disconnection and debt recovery procedures will apply.

A business customer can ask for alternative payment arrangements (e.g. an instalment plan) if they are having payment difficulties.

IMPORTANT!

If you are having difficulties paying a bill, contact your retailer *as soon as possible* to seek assistance. Your retailer may be able to help.



TIP!

All retailers who supply residential customers must have a financial hardship policy. This policy sets out in detail how the retailer will deal with issues of financial hardship. You can contact your retailer for a copy of their policy.

Financial counsellors and consumer advocates

Financial counsellors and consumer advocates can help you negotiate with your retailer. They can also contact your retailer to discuss your situation, if you give your consent.

If you have arranged to see a financial counsellor or consumer advocate to get help with your bill, the retailer must give you at least 15 business days to attend the appointment before taking any further action against you.

Financial counsellors and consumer advocates are often employed by local community organisations and sometimes by local councils. To find one close to where you live, contact your local community legal centre, ring the Financial Counselling Hotline on 1800 007 007, or contact the Financial Counsellors Association WA.

Assistance for paying bills

If you are at risk of disconnection due to financial hardship, you may be eligible for assistance under the WA Government's Utility Hardship Package. The package can provide financial assistance and help reduce the risk of disconnection by identifying energy-saving options.

The Utility Hardship Package has two parts:

- **Hardship Utilities Grant Scheme (HUGS)**
A grant can be provided for up to 85% of the outstanding amount. The maximum amount that you can receive in any 12 month period is \$450 (if you live south of Carnarvon) or \$750 (if you live in Carnarvon or north of Carnarvon). Higher amounts apply if you are assessed as experiencing 'exceptional circumstances of hardship'.
- **Hardship Efficiency Program (HEP)**
Energy information and audits are offered to help reduce energy use and the risk of future disconnection. Rebates are also provided for some energy-saving appliances, such as replacing old fridges.

To apply you must first contact your retailer. The retailer will ask you to go to see a HUGS registered financial counselling service for an assessment and for the application to be completed.