



# Media Statement

9 December 2021

## More protections planned for WA energy consumers

The Economic Regulation Authority is proposing the most substantial changes ever made to the customer protections for electricity customers in Western Australia.

The changes, detailed in a draft decision published today, include:

- New protections for customers experiencing family and domestic violence, including privacy protections, a nine-month moratorium on disconnections, and retailer staff training.
- Setting a minimum bill debt of \$300 before a residential customer can be disconnected for non-payment.
- Extending the assistance measures offered to customers experiencing payment difficulties to all customers who request them. This assistance includes payment extensions and instalment plans.
- Better aligning the Code with the National Energy Customer Framework, to match customer protections in Western Australia to the national standard.

The *Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers* controls and regulates the conduct of retailers and distributors to residential and small business customers, and covers issues like billing, payment, financial hardship, disconnection and complaints.

Economic Regulation Authority Chair Steve Edwell said that this was the most extensive review of the Code ever undertaken, since it was put in place in 2004

“These changes are intended to increase the protections available for all electricity customers in Western Australia, with a particularly focus on the most vulnerable, such as those experiencing financial hardship or family and domestic violence,” Mr Edwell said.

“As the various COVID-19 support measures have been wound back or withdrawn, we have observed a return to pre-pandemic levels of financial hardship, bill debt and distress.

“The ERA also proposes for all retailers to have a family and domestic violence policy, which will ensure that staff within those retailers are suitably trained to deal efficiently and sensitively with customers experiencing violence at home.”

The suite of changes follows an extensive review of the Code by the Electricity Code Consultative Committee, which is an independent group comprised of consumer representatives, policy experts, and energy retailers and distributors.

The Committee made [115 recommendations to the ERA](#) to amend and improve the Code, and the ERA has accepted all these recommendations, as well as proposing some further minor amendments.

The ERA will seek further advice from the Committee prior to making its final decision next year. Before giving its advice, the Committee will conduct further public consultation on the ERA draft decision.

“I thank all members of the Electricity Code Consultative Committee for their time, effort and expertise given to this extensive review thus far,” Mr Edwell said.

### **About the ERA**

The ERA is Western Australia’s independent economic regulator. We aim to ensure the delivery of water, electricity, gas and rail services in Western Australia is in the long-term interest of consumers.

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