

Family violence

This fact sheet explains the supports available to customers who are affected by family violence.

This information applies to customers who live in Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania¹ and the Australian Capital Territory.²

What is family violence?

Family violence, also referred to as domestic violence or abuse, involves a pattern of behaviour intended to coerce, control or dominate someone in a domestic, intimate, family, or family-like relationship.

Family violence may take many forms including physical, emotional, psychological, financial, economic, sexual, social, technological and spiritual abuse.

Children and young people can also be impacted by family violence, both directly or indirectly by hearing, witnessing, or being exposed to its effects.³

Social discrimination and systemic and structural barriers often create significant challenges for people seeking help. These barriers may include limited access to information about their rights, entitlements and how to access services, particularly for individuals facing communication and literacy challenges.

Discrimination based on age, ability, colonial history, criminal record, sexual orientation, poverty, race, sex, gender identity, as well as other forms of bias, can all increase the severity and long-term effects of family violence.⁴

What using essential services to cause harm can look like

Essential services, including energy, can be exploited by perpetrators of family violence to cause harm.⁵

Examples of exploitation of energy services by perpetrators may include:

- controlling your access to energy bills or refusing to contribute to payment, or interfering with your attempts to set up or maintain payment plans leading to mounting debt and eventual disconnection,

¹ For customers in Tasmania, this fact sheet applies to electricity only and not gas.

² Customers who live in Victoria should review the Essential Services Commission of Victoria's [website](#).

³ Safe and Equal, [Forms of family violence](#), Safe and Equal website, 2024, accessed 17 May 2025.

⁴ Safe and Equal, [Impacts of family violence](#), Safe and Equal website, 2024, accessed 17 May 2025.

⁵ AEMC, [Final Rule Determination](#), AEMC, 2022, p 1.

- controlling spending, access to bank accounts or other assets, impacting your ability to pay energy bills,
- pressuring you to sign or agree to contracts or arrangements with a retailer,
- limiting your access to utilities such as heating or cooling,
- threatening or organising the disconnection of your energy supply,
- obtaining your personal information from your retailer such as your contact details and using this information to locate or contact you.

Family violence support services

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call triple zero (000).

1800RESPECT

Offers free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week counselling support to people impacted by domestic, family or sexual violence.

Contact by calling 1800 737 732 or visiting 1800respect.org.au.

Are You Safe at Home?

The [Are You Safe at Home?](https://www.areyousafeathome.gov.au) website provides access to family violence support resources and a list of both national and location-based resources.

What supports are available from my energy retailer?

Energy retailers have a crucial role in supporting customers affected by family violence and reducing and preventing the harm that perpetrators can impose through the energy market.

If you think you may be affected by family violence, and consider it safe to do so, contact your retailer as soon as possible for more information on the supports available to you.

Family violence policy

All energy retailers must have a family violence policy published on their website in an easily accessible place that sets out how they will identify and assist customers affected by family violence.

If you are unable or it is unsafe to access your retailer's family violence policy on their website, you can contact your energy retailer to find out how they can support you.

If you are affected by family violence and having difficulty paying your energy bills, supports your retailer must offer, where applicable, include:

- waiving fees payable under your retail contract for late payment,
- flexible payment options such as payment using Centrepay (a free, voluntary bill-paying service offered by Services Australia to Centrelink customers), and
- considering the potential impact of debt recovery action before taking action to recover arrears from you or transferring your debt to a debt collector.

Your safety matters

If you are affected by family violence, your retailer must have regard firstly to your safety, as far as your safety is impacted as a customer affected by family violence, and must take into account your particular circumstances. Your retailer must not disclose or provide access to your information to any other person, including current or former joint account holders, without your consent.

Your retailer must take reasonable steps to identify your preferred method of communication, and, once identified, must keep a record of that method and use it when communicating with you, whether that be phone, email, SMS or post. You can change your preferred method of communication at any time by letting your retailer know.

You may also be able to give someone else you trust the authority to act on your behalf. Doing so means your retailer can engage directly with that person, including sending bills and information to them.

Retailers must also appropriately engage with and assist you, and treat you with respect and flexibility at all times.

In engaging with you, your retailer may ask you for information so they can better understand your circumstances. However, your retailer **must not** require you, or anyone acting on your behalf, to provide documentary evidence that you are affected by family violence as a precondition for support. If your retailer requests evidence as a precondition for support, you **do not** have to provide it.

Your retailer must ensure their staff are able to assist you

Your retailer must ensure their staff are able to understand the nature and consequences of family violence and able to identify, engage appropriately and assist customers affected by family violence.

What is the Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) role?

Supporting consumers affected by family violence is an enduring AER [Compliance and Enforcement priority](#) which means that the AER will prioritise issues impacting consumers affected by family violence.

In May 2025, in response to Catherine Fitzpatrick's [Designed to Disrupt: Safety by design for essential services paper](#), the AER published [an open letter](#) calling on the energy industry to make its services safer for customers affected by family violence.

The AER also recognises its role in preventing the misuse of products and services for family violence and financial abuse. To support this, the AER has developed a new [Strategy to support a safer energy market for customers affected by family violence](#).

The strategy includes three key priorities for the AER:

1. building organisational awareness and capability within the AER,
2. supporting a regulatory framework that enables safety by design, and
3. encouraging regulated entities to prioritise safety in their businesses.

Contact us

Australian Energy Regulator (AER)	
Phone	1300 585 165 or +61 2 6243 1306 (International) Monday to Friday, 10am to 3pm AEST/AEDT
Website	www.aer.gov.au
Email	aer inquiry@ aer.gov.au
Post	GPO Box 3131 Canberra ACT 2601
First Nations Infoline	
Phone	1300 303 143 A dedicated phone service for Indigenous Australians seeking information about their consumer rights and consumer protection
Languages other than English	
Phone	13 14 50 and ask for the AER on 1300 585 165
Website	www.tisnational.gov.au
Hearing and speech assistance	
National Relay Service – TTY Users	
Phone	13 36 77 and ask for the AER on 1300 585 165
National Relay Service – Speak and Listen	
Phone	1300 555 727 and ask for the AER on 1300 585 165
National Relay Service – Internet Relay	
Website	Visit nrschat.nrscall.gov.au/nrs/internetrelay and ask for the AER on 1300 585 165

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