

Media Release

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, the Environment and Climate Change
Minister for Solar Homes



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TARGETED SUPPORT FOR VICTORIANS STRUGGLING WITH ENERGY BILLS

The Victorian Government is helping households keep the lights on this winter, with a package of support to protect Victorians doing it tough and make sure everyone knows their rights.

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio announced the \$3.7 million package today, which includes new financial counsellors and online training for more than 1,100 frontline community workers so Victorians experiencing hardship can get immediate support to manage electricity and gas bills.

With many people suddenly experiencing financial hardship due to Coronavirus, and all Victorians spending more time at home, bills are expected to become increasingly more difficult to pay for many households.

As a part of this package, financial counsellors will be recruited and trained to help people one-on-one to manage energy bills as well as broader household financial difficulties.

Training will also be provided to more than 1,100 frontline community workers, so they can give targeted advice on dealing with energy bills – including how to get the best deal from energy companies and what existing support is available.

The Government will also launch a new energy brokerage program to give one-on-one support to around 3,000 households at risk of financial hardship to help them get the best value energy deal.

The package will also ensure Victorians know their rights under the Payment Difficulty Framework. As a part of the Government's nation-leading reforms, energy companies must assist any household that engages with them – this includes a payment plan or extending bill due dates while customers work towards paying for their usage.

No household engaging with their energy company can be disconnected from electricity or gas.

This new \$3.7 million package is just one of the Government's measures to reduce energy bills. The Government has also regulated a fair price for electricity through the Victorian Default Offer – saving many households hundreds of dollars off their bills – and forced energy companies to tell customers their best value deal.

The Government is also putting a power station on more than 700,000 homes through our landmark Solar Homes program, delivering solar PV, solar hot water and batteries throughout Victoria at no up-front cost.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio

"When a bill arrives in the mail, we want Victorians doing it tough to know that there is support available."

"This package will help people find support and know their rights. Under our nation-leading reforms, if you engage with your energy company they cannot disconnect you or pursue you for debt – they must help you."

"We have created the strongest hardship protections in the country to make sure Victorian households are guaranteed the support and compassion they deserve. These protections have never been more important."