



## Disconnection: what are the rules?

Energy companies must offer customers who are scheduled for disconnection the option to enter a payment plan as an alternative to being disconnected.

Your client cannot be disconnected:

- after 3pm on any day
- on a Friday, a weekend, a public holiday or the day before a public holiday
- if they have an appointment for EAPA (Energy Accounts Payment Assistance)
- if they are using a life support machine
- if the supplier has not provided them (in writing) with the option of entering into a payment plan.

## Disconnection: what can I do?

If your client is unable to pay their bill to stop disconnection or to get reconnected:

- contact the company to discuss a payment arrangement or eligibility for their customer assistance program
- help your client locate an agency that distributes EAPA (the supplier will put a hold on an impending disconnection if your client has an EAPA appointment)
- refer your client to a financial counsellor to help work out an affordable payment plan.

If you are unable to locate EAPA distributors or negotiate a reasonable and affordable payment plan, contact EWON.

## Disconnection: what can EWON do?

EWON can request a hold on an impending disconnection while your client locates assistance (such as EAPA) or a realistic payment plan is negotiated.

If your client has been disconnected, EWON can try to negotiate reconnection based on an agreed payment plan.

EWON can check that the company has followed the disconnection rules.

## My client has missed payments: can they be disconnected?

If your client enters a payment arrangement then misses a payment, they risk being disconnected. It is important for them to contact the company if they can't make a payment or keep to their plan.

## Customer assistance programs: how can they help?

Energy companies are required to provide an assistance program to help customers in financial difficulty. These programs can:

- protect your client from disconnection
- offer tailored payment plans based on your client's capacity to pay and energy usage
- provide energy saving information and audits

## Not enough EAPA vouchers: where do I get more?

If your agency runs out of EAPA vouchers, contact your head office or the EAPA Coordinator on (02) 8281 7712 to request additional vouchers.

## Unused EAPA vouchers: do they need to be returned?

Yes. It is important to return unused EAPA vouchers to your organisation's head office or to the EAPA Coordinator so they can be redistributed.

## Share houses: who is responsible for the bills?

If your client's name is on the account they may be liable for any amount owing, not just what they believe is their share.

A person cannot be held responsible for an account in someone else's name. However, if the account holder moves out your client can be held responsible for energy usage from the date the account holder moved out.

## Tips for resolving complaints

1. If you have any problems with your energy or water company, contact them first and explain your situation. Keep records of letters, names, times and dates.
2. If the call centre staff can't help you, ask to speak to a supervisor.
3. If the problem is not fixed, contact EWON by phone, fax, email, letter or visit [www.ewon.com.au](http://www.ewon.com.au) to make an online complaint.

## About EWON

The Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) provides an independent way of resolving customer complaints about all electricity and gas suppliers in New South Wales and some water suppliers. Our service is free, fair and independent. Our aim is to keep essential services within reach of everyone.

## Contact EWON

FREECALL	1800 246 545* Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm
FREEFAX	1800 812 291
FREEPOST	Reply Paid K1343 Haymarket NSW 1239
INTERPRETER	131 450
TTY/VOICE	133 677
EMAIL	<a href="mailto:omb@ewon.com.au">omb@ewon.com.au</a>
WEBSITE	<a href="http://www.ewon.com.au">www.ewon.com.au</a>

\*Calls from mobile phones may attract a fee, which will vary depending on your service provider. If you are calling from a mobile phone, let us know and EWON will call you back.

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### Your client has left the property: can they be billed?

If your client was the account holder they can continue to be billed if they did not close their account before they left the property. However, they are only liable for consumption up until it can be shown that another person moved into the property.

Customers need to give the company at least three days notice to close their account.

### Backbilling: how far back can they bill?

If the company has made an error and undercharged your client or not sent them a bill, they can only issue a backbill for a maximum of 12 months.

The company must also give your client an equivalent time to pay if requested. For example, if they are backbilled for six months usage, your client is entitled to six months to repay the debt.

### Energy contracts and marketing: what if your client has signed?

Some customers have experienced difficulties managing their accounts after they have signed an energy contract.

EWON has received complaints about limited methods of payment, delayed billing and problems with transfers.

EWON has also received complaints about misleading marketing and pressure tactics by marketers.

If your client is experiencing problems with their contract, they should contact the company in the first instance.

If they are not satisfied with the company's response, they can contact EWON to make a complaint.

### Hot water systems and high bills: who do they contact?

If your client has a dispute with their landlord over a high bill resulting from a faulty hot water service, they can contact the Consumer, Trader & Tenancy Tribunal (CTTT) on 1300 135 399 or the Tenants' Union on 1800 251 101.

Your client should continue to make payments towards their account or set up a payment plan with the company.

If they cannot negotiate a realistic payment plan with the company, they can contact EWON.

### Your client disputes an account: what should they do?

If your client disputes a bill or account they should contact the company to discuss the problem. If they are not satisfied with the outcome or the company's response, they can call EWON.

Some disputes may take time to resolve however until the problem is sorted out, your client can be held liable for amounts owing if the account is in their name. For this reason they should continue to make some payments towards their account (eg they can pay what they would normally or what they can afford).

### Representing your client: what information do I need?

You will need to get verbal or written authority from your client in order to discuss their account with the company.

In most cases your client can give this permission by phone or by filling out an authority to act form.

Sensitive information should only be provided with your client's consent (eg if they are having difficulty paying their bill due to serious illness or unemployment).

### Contacts for customer assistance programs

\*For advocates and customers on the program only. Customers enquiring about the program should phone the company's call centre.

#### AGL/ActewAGL

Customer service

☎ 131 245

Staying Connected

☎ 1300 659 925\*

#### Australian Power and Gas

☎ 133 298

#### Country Energy

Country Support

☎ 132 356

#### EnergyAustralia

Contact Centre

☎ 13 15 35

Community Workers Priority line

☎ 1300 309 016

EnergyAssist program

☎ 1300 723 492

#### Jackgreen

☎ 1300 663 449

#### Integral Energy

Customer service

☎ 131 002

INpower

☎ 9853 6728\*

#### Origin Energy

Power On

☎ 132 461

#### Powerdirect

☎ 1300 307 966

#### TRUenergy

☎ 1800 558 643 or

☎ 8628 1566