

Frequently Asked Questions

Utility Hardship Support Package

What is the Utility Hardship Support Package?

The Utility Hardship Support Package is a range of programs designed to support Victorians who need help with their energy bills. The programs are being delivered by community organisations with support from the Victorian Government.

There are three programs that make up the package:

- The Consumer Policy and Research Centre (CPRC) is delivering a series of online events based on its Energy Simplified Program to help households manage energy costs and reduce bills. The program also includes online events for community workers so they can help their clients save on bills
- Consumer Affairs Victoria is expanding its existing Financial Counselling Program to include additional financial counsellors to help people in financial difficulty to manage their debts, including assistance with energy matters.
- A consortium between the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL), the Australian Energy Foundation, Uniting Vic. Tas and BehaviourWorks Australia is delivering the Energy Assistance Program. This program provides one-on-one bill support and tailored energy assistance to help eligible households save money on electricity and gas and get advice on energy issues.

Who are they for?

The programs are available to all Victorians who are having trouble paying their energy bills or would like some help to reduce energy costs and better understand their bills. The level of assistance provided through the targeted programs will depend on a person's needs and circumstances.

CPRC is also delivering online events designed for the community sector, to show frontline community workers simple steps that will help clients save on their electricity and gas bills.

How long will they be available?

CPRC will deliver free online events until the end of 2020 and the Energy Assistance Program will be available until 30 June 2021. Financial Counselling Program services are always available.

How can people access them?

All programs are available over the phone and online.

- CPRC's online events: visit energyinfohub.org.au/webinars
- Financial Counselling Program: visit moneysmart.gov.au/managing-debt/financial-counselling or contact the National Debt Helpline on 1800 007 007
- Energy Assistance Program: visit www.bsl.org.au/energy-assist or contact 1800 830 029

Do these programs provide services for people who speak another language?

Yes – The Financial Counselling Program and the Energy Assistance Program can be accessed through either translator or interpreter services. There are also translated materials available in a wide range of languages.

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How can I find out more?

Visit www.victorianenergysaver.vic.gov.au/having-trouble-paying-your-energy-bills or visit the relevant organisation's website:

- CPRC's Energy Info Hub: www.energyinfohub.org.au/webinars
- Financial Counselling Program: www.moneysmart.gov.au/managing-debt/financial-counselling
- Energy Assistance Program: www.bsl.org.au/energy-assist/