



Family Violence Policy



RETAIL

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Purpose

This Family Violence Policy outlines the commitment from Ergon Energy Queensland Pty Ltd (Ergon Energy Retail) to *support customers* affected by family violence in a respectful and flexible manner.



Introduction

We acknowledge that Family Violence can and does impact our customers. This policy applies to all small customers, including former customers, who have been, or are still, being affected by family violence.

Family Violence can take many forms including:

- Social Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Psychological/Emotional Abuse
- Financial Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Stalking/Intimidation
- Verbal abuse
- Technology facilitated abuse
- Coercive control.

This policy explains:

- How we can assist you
- How we will identify if you are an affected customer and what we will do to prevent you having to repeatedly disclose this to us
- How we will consider your safety
- What we can do to assist with your electricity bill
- How we will protect your personal information
- How we will communicate with you and
- Outline the additional support you can access in Queensland.

Definition of Family Violence

Family Violence has the meaning given to the term “domestic abuse” in section 8 (8) of the Intervention Orders (Prevention of Abuse) Act 2009 SA.

How we can *assist* you

Ergon Retail only operates in regional Queensland. We understand the geography, diversity and the needs of our regional Queensland customers.

Our staff receive specialist training to ensure they understand the nature and consequences of *Family Violence*. This training includes the ability to identify and engage appropriately with an affected customer. We will never ask you to provide documentary evidence that you have been impacted by Family Violence. Just letting us know is all we need, and this allows us to work with you and tailor our response to your needs.



Once we identify you as an affected customer, we will offer flexible support depending on your circumstances.

This may include:

- Referral to our hardship program if you are experiencing payment difficulties
- Adding a password and other system protections to your account
- Referral to a specialist Family Violence support service
- Only communicating with you via your preferred method.

We recognise you may wish to continue to self-manage your electricity account and we will never force you to accept assistance offered.

Identifying affected customers

Our staff are trained to identify indicators of people experiencing Family Violence.

If you are not comfortable, or it is not safe for you to confide in us, our trained staff will verify your safety and offer additional support based on your circumstances.

We will ensure we engage respectfully and with empathy to provide the support you need with your electricity bill.

Once you disclose to us that you are impacted by Family Violence, we have systems in place that will ensure you do not need to repeat this information to us again in the future.

How we will consider your safety

We understand a one size fits all approach does not work. Our trained staff will consult with you to understand your safety needs whilst considering your unique circumstances and will work with you to ensure your safety is always considered.



What can we do to assist with your *electricity bill?*

We recognise Family Violence as a potential cause of payment difficulty. We will work with you to determine a suitable solution tailored to your needs.

In working with you we will take into consideration:

- (a) The potential impact of debt recovery action; and
- (b) Whether other persons are also responsible for the electricity usage that resulted in the accumulation of arrears.

This may include:

- Management of your account under our hardship program
- Offering you flexible payment plan options
- Preventing de-energisation or the referral to a debt collection agency for non-payment of account. We will never charge you a late payment fee.
- Potential deferral of debt or other measures deemed appropriate to your individual circumstances.

We can also work jointly with your appointed authorised representatives to assist with communication and management of your financial situation in relation to either your current or previous electricity accounts.



How we will protect your personal information

We will not disclose or provide access to information about you to any other person without your consent unless required by law or it is a lawful requirement.

This includes not providing any information that may be used to identify, communicate with or locate you, such as information about your whereabouts, contact details, financial or personal circumstances.

This also includes not providing access to confidential information to a person who is, or has been, a joint account holder with you.

How we will *communicate* with you

We will work with you to agree your preferred communication method and will offer alternative options of communication if your preferred method is not practicable.

We would strongly encourage you to provide a password for your Ergon Energy Retail profile as an additional protection for your information.



Additional support within Queensland

While we are here to help, you can also access specialist support services available in regional Queensland.

If you are in immediate danger, then call 000.

Otherwise the following support services provide support in regional Queensland.

Service	What they do	Phone or Website
<u>1800 RESPECT</u>	A 24-hour national counselling line for those who have experienced (or are at risk of) sexual assault, family and domestic violence. (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)	1800 737 732
<u>DV Connect Womensline</u>	Qld statewide telephone service for women experiencing domestic or family violence. DV Connect is also positioned to support the LGBTQ+ community. (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)	1800 811 811
<u>DV Connect Mensline</u>	Free, confidential telephone counselling, referral and support service for men. DV Connect is also positioned to support the LGBTQ+ community. (9am to midnight, 7 days)	1800 600 636
<u>Rainbow Sexual and Domestic Violence Helpline</u>	The national LGBTQ+ domestic and family violence and sexual violence helpline and counselling service.	1800 497 212
<u>Lifeline Australia</u>	Crisis Support. Suicide Prevention. Information and support services.	13 11 14
<u>Leaving Violence Program by Uniting Care</u>	The Leaving Violence Program will support people experiencing intimate partner violence with financial assistance of up to \$5,000 and support services.	leavingviolenceprogram.org.au 1800 253 283 (Mon-Fri, 8:30am - 5:30pm)
<u>Central Queensland Indigenous Development (CQID) Family Violence Support</u>	Providing support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live across Central Queensland and surrounds.	cqid.com.au/domestic-violence/ domestic-violence-support/
<u>QLD Government</u>	Information, services and support for people impacted by domestic and family violence.	qld.gov.au/community
<u>Refugee and Immigration Legal Service</u>	Free legal assistance in immigration and refugee matters for people in need.	rails.org.au

Governance

We will review this policy at least once every two years.

We will complete regular evaluation and monitoring activities to ensure our system and processes remain fit for purpose with customer wellbeing and safety the main priority.

Complaints and Compliance Management

We manage complaints in accordance with AS/NZS 10002:2014 – Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations which provides best-practice guidelines for effective complaints management, and we aim to resolve customer complaints at the first point of contact.

If, after we provide a resolution, you are not satisfied that the outcome is fair or equitable, you may request escalation to a dedicated Complaints Specialist. The specialist will conduct an independent review and advise if any further actions are possible.

If you remain dissatisfied, you may escalate your complaint externally to the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ) using the following contact details:

- **Phone:** 1800 662 837 (free call)
- **Online:** www.ewoq.com.au
- **Email:** complaints@ewoq.com.au
- **In writing:**
Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ)
PO Box 3640,
South Brisbane BC QLD 4101

The Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland is a free, fair and independent body established by the Queensland Government to investigate and resolve complaints and disputes between EWOQ scheme participants (Energy Retailers and Distributors) and small energy customers.

Contact Us

If you are experiencing family violence and need **assistance with your account** contact us:

Customer Service

1800 670 352

8am - 4:30pm Mon to Fri

ergon.com.au/contact

National Relay Service (NRS)

If you are d/Deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech or communication difficulty, you can contact us through the National Relay Service (NRS).

For more information or a full list of contact options, visit www.accesshub.gov.au/about-the-nrs.

Translating and Interpreting service

If you need assistance from someone in a language other than English, you can contact us through this Australian Government service by phoning 13 14 50 and request the Ergon Energy Retail phone number you wish to contact.

