



Customer Hardship Policy (New South Wales & South Australia)

Tango Energy Pty Ltd

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1. Preamble

Tango Energy Pty Ltd (**Tango Energy**) is committed to providing residential customers facing financial hardship the opportunity to take advantage of any relevant relief grant or emergency assistance where applicable and to establish sustainable payment arrangements to manage their electricity bills through our Customer Assistance Program (the **Program**).

Tango Energy recognizes the supply of electricity is an essential service for residential customers.

Tango Energy understands disconnection of the supply of electricity can have a significant impact on members of the household. This policy is aimed at preventing disconnection for a customer identified as experiencing financial hardship.

Tango Energy has systems in place to enable it to meet its obligations with respect to customer hardship in:

- the Retail Law;
- the Retail Rules; and
- the Tango Energy Customer Hardship Policy (NSW, South Australia).

2. Introduction

This policy applies to all Tango Energy's residential customers living in SA, NSW, QLD and ACT who are having difficulty paying their bills due to hardship.

You may be experiencing hardship because of factors including:

- a death in the family;
- household illness;
- family violence;
- unemployment; or
- reduced income.

This policy explains:

- what we will do to help you manage your energy bills;
- how we consider your circumstances and needs; and
- your rights as a customer in our hardship program.

You can also ask a support person to contact us on your behalf, such as:

- a financial counsellor; or
- someone who helps you manage your bills.

Where a customer has elected a representative to act on their behalf, Tango Energy will engage with the customer's representative as they would the customer and consistent with the customer's consent and instructions to Tango Energy.

We need your permission to talk to your support person. If you wish to appoint a representative to act on your behalf, written notification must be provided to Tango Energy confirming the

appointment of your representative. This notification should be signed by both you and your nominated representative.

3. What we will do to help you

Tango Energy will inform you about the Program where:

- you tell us you are having trouble paying your bill;
- you are referred to our program by a financial counsellor or other community worker; or
- we are concerned you may be experiencing financial hardship.

We will recommend you speak to a staff member to help you join the Program if you have:

- a history of late payments;
- broken payment plans;
- requested payment extensions;
- received a disconnection warning notice; or
- have been disconnected for non-payment.

We can also support you to join the Program if you tell us:

- you are eligible for a relief grant or other emergency assistance; or
- you have personal circumstances where hardship support may help. For example, a death in the family or job loss.

You may have trouble paying your bills for different reasons. Please contact us so we can discuss your individual situation. Our staff are specially trained to help you with hardship.

Staff are trained to consider a range of factors impacting your circumstances including:

- changes in income and financial situation;
- review of your payment history, historical payment behaviours, unusual payment histories;
- changes in your personal circumstances; and
- information from other relevant parties such as financial counsellors.

We will assess your application for hardship assistance within 2 business days.

We will let you know if you are accepted into the Program within 7 business days from the receipt of your application.

If you are accepted into the Program we will:

- tell you if you are on the right energy plan or if there is a better plan for you;
- tell you about government concessions, relief schemes or energy rebates you may be able to receive;
- give you ideas about how to reduce your energy use: and
- talk to you about a payment amount that suits your circumstances.

We can send you a free copy of our hardship policy. When a customer is deemed ineligible for the Program, a reason and explanation for the ineligibility will be provided.

4. Payment options

There are different payment options available to customers in hardship, these include the following:

- payment plans;
- payment extensions;
- deferral of arrears;
- flexible payments; or
- Centrepay.

To make your payment plan, we will consider:

- how much you can pay;
- how much you owe; and
- how much energy we expect you will use in the next 12 months.

This will help us determine a payment plan that is right for you. We will offer a payment plan to suit your situation. This will include payments to cover:

- what you owe; and
- an amount to cover your future energy use.

Once we agree to a payment plan, we will send you information including:

- who you can contact for more help;
- how long the payment plan will be in place for;
- the amount you will pay each time;
- how many payments you need to make;
- when you need to make your payments (this is also called the frequency of the payments); and
- how we calculated your payments.

You can choose to use Centrepay, if you are eligible. Centrepay is a free service you can use to help pay your bills. Centrepay can automatically take an amount of money from your Centrelink payments to go toward energy bills and expenses.

We will see if another energy plan may be better for you. If you agree, we can transfer you to a better energy plan for free. Depending on the rules in our hardship policy, we may be able to remove some debt, fees or charges you owe.

If you miss a payment, we will contact you to see if you need help. We will contact you by your preferred contact method, which may include:

- phone call; or
- sms/email.

What you must do

Tell us if your situation changes and you can no longer make the payments in your plan. We can then review your payment arrangements. Please notify us immediately if your contact details change.

We may stop helping you if you:

- stop making payments under your plan; or
- do not tell us when your contact details change.

If you have had two payment plans cancelled in the last 12 months because you did not follow your plan;

- we do not have to offer you another plan; and
- we might disconnect your energy.

5. Other support to help pay your energy bill

Depending on the state or territory you live in, there are other support options to assist you in paying your energy bills.

What we will do:

We will tell you about other ways you can get help to pay your energy bill, such as:

- government relief schemes;
- energy rebates;
- concession programs; and
- financial counselling services.

If you find out you are eligible for these services, let us know as soon as possible so we can help you.

6. Services offered under the Program

As a member of the Program you can access a range of programs and services to help you, including:

- government grants and other state government related programs;
- concession if not already applied;
- financial counsellor referral;
- government concessions and programs;
- energy efficiency advice;
- financial counsellor support; and
- payment vouchers or advance payment allowances if applicable.

What we will do:

We will consider your individual situation to find the right programs (e.g. concession programs) or services that meet your needs.

7. We want to check you have the right energy plan

When you join the Program, we will talk to you about your energy use and whether you are on the right plan.

If we think there is a better energy plan for you, we will:

- explain why the plan is better; and
- ask if you'd like to transfer to the new plan for free.

We will only talk to you about energy plans we can offer.

8. We can help you save energy

Using less energy can save you money.

What we will do

When you join the Program, we can give you tips to use less energy. This can be different depending on the state or territory you live in. We discuss your consumption and usage and provide tips around savings you can make in the household.

We may also provide you with Energy Efficiency Advice through our partner Uniting Kildonan.

9. We will work with you

If you have joined our hardship program, we will not:

- charge late payment fees;
- require a security deposit; and
- make changes to your plan without your agreement.

For example, we will not put you on a shortened collection cycle unless you agree first.

10. Tango Energy's overarching responsibilities

For the customers who are experiencing payment difficulties due to hardship, Tango Energy does take into account all of the circumstances of the customer we are aware of. We will always act fairly and reasonably, having regard to those circumstances.

When contacted by a customer, we will give the customer clear information about the assistance available to them under the Tango Energy's customer hardship policy.

As soon as practicable, we will provide a customer who is entitled to receive assistance under the Tango Energy's customer hardship policy with that assistance.

11. Steps used to identify customers experiencing payment difficulty due to hardship

Tango Energy approaches hardship with sensitivity and flexibility. We treat our customers as individuals, recognising that each customer has a distinct set of circumstances, and responds differently to the multitude of stresses that result in hardship.

We encourage customers who are struggling financially to contact us either directly or through a third party, such as a financial counsellor or a welfare agency.

We understand some customers may feel uncomfortable discussing their financial problems; therefore, we also employ strategies to assist in identifying vulnerable customers. Our strategies include using credit cycles designed to alert staff to poor payment history and a pattern of government assistance grants.

Our staff are trained to pose questions designed to invite customers to admit hardship. We also send hardship information to all customers to foster awareness of the program.

12. Assessment of customer circumstances

To ensure the best outcome for each customer experiencing financial difficulties, the Customer Assistance Team member will, based on each individual case, assess:

- the suitability and bill impact of the customer's energy product and tariff, with specific regard to:
 - its cost effectiveness;
 - the customer's overall energy consumption; and
- the previous tariff, where applicable (including network tariff).
- the potential benefits of:
 - available grants, concessions or financial counselling services that may be available;
 - conducting an energy efficiency audit, the purpose of which is to establish whether savings can be achieved by altering the type and or use of appliances within the household, either:
 - over the phone, where practical, to assess the type and condition of appliances and their common use; or
 - on-site, where it is appropriate to do so factoring in location, proximity and relevant health and safety requirements, to assess the type and condition of appliances.
- When considering conducting energy efficiency audits the Customer Assistance Team will consider:
 - the location, proximity and resources required to facilitate the audit, whether that be by Tango Energy staff or a third party;
 - the relative age of the property and the types of appliances in use (including their general age);
 - the type and frequency of use for each of those appliances;
 - relevant occupational health and safety risks; and
 - for field audits, whether there will be partial cost to the customer, and how the benefits of incurring such a cost will be established.

Note: where a field audit is considered appropriate, Tango Energy will consider whether the potential savings that may be achieved exceed the contribution required, communicate the potential benefits to the customer and seek the customers consent to any costs that they may incur as a result conducting a field audit.

- Subject to the completion of an energy efficiency audit, whether over the phone or on-site, Tango Energy will provide further advice. Tango Energy will consider appliance replacement or repair which will only be carried out by a suitably qualified trades person.

Note: any appliance replacement will be considered on a case by case basis and negotiated directly, either the customer and or the property owner, depending on the nature of the occupancy, and may be facilitated by a third party.

- Where any changes are made to a tariff or where an energy audit or appliance replacement is considered, whether or not they impose costs, the customer must provide explicit informed consent to these changes. Where the customer cannot provide such consent, such as where the customer is not the owner of a property, they must facilitate consent being obtained.

13. Application process

The process for applying to the Program for customers experiencing hardship is to contact the Tango Energy customer service team using the telephone number or email address located on our customer bills, website or with your welcome pack.

Our customer service team members will collect information from the customer such as:

- the customer's details; and
- the reason/s why the customer is facing difficulty paying their electricity bill.

Once approved, a letter of acceptance and welcome pack would be sent to the customer within two business days. When the customer is accepted into the Program, standard billing reminders will be disabled and the customer will be reconnected if a disconnection has occurred.

If you require an interpreter service to speak with us, please call 131 450. If you have a hearing or speech impairment, please call via the National Relay Service. Simply dial 133 677 from your TTY phone and ask to be connected to 1800 010 648.

14. Training

Tango Energy educates our staff to identify and work empathetically and non-judgmentally with customers in hardship. Our training covers issues relating to financial hardship, identification and referral processes and protocols, and respectful communication with customers. We provide ongoing refresher training to all staff.

15. Accessibility of customer information

Information about the Program will also be provided to all new customers and again to all customers in all bills, overdue notices and follow-up letters.

Where it appears to us that non-payment of an energy bill is the result of a residential customer experiencing payment difficulties due to hardship, or we have otherwise identified a customer as experiencing hardship, we will inform the customer as soon as possible of our Program. We will provide a copy of this policy on request to any appropriate welfare agency or program, at no expense.

We will also remind our customers about the Program when payment options are being outlined.

Customers can always call us on 1800 010 648, select the residential customer option and the option regarding a payment plan or more time to pay, to speak to a staff member specifically trained to handle enquiries about the Tango Energy customer hardship policy and the Program. Alternatively, customers can contact one of our specifically trained staff members by sending their enquiry to credit@tangoenergy.com.

16. Payment plans and options

Should a customer notify Tango Energy that their circumstances are impacting their ability to pay our Customer Assistance Team member will reassess their capacity to pay. Our Customer Assistance Team may suggest appropriate payment options after consulting with the customer on the proposed changes to their plan. A revised payment plan will be provided free to the customer.

Our Customer Assistance Team is trained in dealing with customers in an empathetic and respectful manner and has knowledge of appropriate government concession programs and financial counselling services for participants.

All participants in the Program are provided with welcome packs that include information about a range of support services available, including financial counsellors and state government assistance and support services (concessions, grants, etc.).

These programs and concessions include (but are not limited to):

Jurisdiction	Program	Contact
Australia-wide	Utility Bill Payment Voucher	Anglicare 132 622 Salvation Army 137 258
Australia-wide	Advance Payment Utilities Allowance Essential Medical Equipment Payment	Department of Human Services 136 240
South Australia	Residential Park Resident Concessions Energy concessions	South Australian Department of Communities and Social Inclusion 1800 307 758

Our Customer Assistance Team will discuss with a customer their eligibility against the guidelines set out for each program and identify which one or more may be appropriate.

If there is any doubt about eligibility, our team will check with the relevant government agency. We can also help with the application process, if requested.

17. Promoting and publicising the policy

Tango Energy will include a copy of this policy and a summary, plain English version on our website: <https://tangoenergy.com/hardship-policy> .

Information about the Program will also be provided to all new customers and again to all customers in all bills, overdue notices and follow-up letters.

Where it appears to us that non-payment of an energy bill is the result of a residential customer experiencing payment difficulties due to hardship, or we have otherwise identified a customer as experiencing hardship, we will inform the customer as soon as possible of our Program. We will provide a copy of this policy on request to any appropriate welfare agency or program, at no expense.

Customers can always call us on 1800 010 648 to ask about the Program.

18. Privacy

The financial and personal information disclosed by a customer through participation in Tango Energy's Program will be managed in accordance with our Privacy Policy <https://tangoenergy.com/privacy>.

19. Complaints

We encourage customers to resolve complaints directly with our team on 1800 010 648.

Customers can also report problems, complaints and feedback relating to this policy through:

- our website at www.tangoenergy.com/complaints;
- via email support@tangoenergy.com;
- phone 1800 010 648;
- fax 03 8621 6111; or
- write to us at Tango Energy, PO Box 320, Geelong North, VIC 3215.

Independent dispute resolution for our electricity customers is also available through the relevant energy ombudsman in each jurisdiction at the contact details below.

Jurisdiction	Ombudsman	Contact
South Australia	Energy and Water Ombudsman (South Australia)	1800 665 565 (freecall) contact@ewosa.com.au www.ewosa.com.au
New South Wales	Energy and Water Ombudsman New South Wales	1800 246 545 contact@ewonsw.com.au
Queensland	Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland	1800 662 837 complaints@enoq.com.au