

Family Violence Policy

Purpose

Electricity and gas services can potentially be exploited by perpetrators of family violence to harm their victims.

Simply Energy's Family Violence Policy explains how customers affected by family violence can access safe, supportive and flexible assistance to maintain their personal and financial safety, and keep their energy connected.

Who is eligible for assistance under our family violence policy?

We will provide assistance to any Simply Energy customer affected by family violence. You do not need to be the primary account holder to access this assistance.

Who is affected by family violence?

Millions of Australians experience family violence every year. People who experience family violence can be from any socioeconomic background, religion, education level, age, gender or sexual orientation.

The impact of family violence is far-reaching, causing social isolation, unemployment, homelessness, financial destitution and serious injury.

Family violence is a broad term to describe various abusive behaviours that are instigated by a person/perpetrator towards someone they have a relationship (or former relationship) with. These relationships can include, but are not limited to;

- domestic relationships (for example, married or de facto partners);
- intimate personal relationships;
- parental and guardian relationships;
- sibling and other familial relationships;
- relationships according to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander kinship rules (or other culturally recognised family groups); or
- a carer relationship.

What is family violence?

Family violence takes many forms. Examples can include, but are not limited to;

Physical violence

- physically hurting or restraining
- sleep or food deprivation or forced feeding

Sexual assault or sexually abusive behaviour

- unwanted touching or rape
- unwanted exposure to pornography
- sexual jokes or using sexually degrading insults

Verbal abuse

- putting the person down and calling them names
- shifting the responsibility for abusive behaviour onto the victim
- emotional or psychological abuse
- making the person feel afraid by using looks, actions and gestures
- making light of the abuse or saying the abuse didn't happen

Stalking

- visiting at work in inappropriate ways
- sending repeated upsetting phone calls/emails/texts

Financial abuse

- stopping the person from getting or keeping a job
- making the person ask for money or restricting their access to money, for example by managing any allowance they get

Spiritual or cultural abuse

- preventing the person from practising their religion or ridiculing their religious beliefs or practices
- misusing spiritual or religious beliefs and practices to justify other types of abuse and violence

Abuse or threatened abuse of pets

- threatening to harm or kill pets
- injuring, killing or abducting pets

Damage to property or belongings

- threatening damage to property
- breaking, hiding or damaging belongings

Technology assisted abuse

- using technology, such as smart phones, social media and apps to threaten, isolate, abuse, track or stalk the victim
- using technology to control what the victim does, who they see and talk to, what they read

Serious neglect where there is a relationship of dependence

- withholding access to the person's money or belongings
- not allowing services to help someone
- behaviour by a person using violence that causes a child to be exposed to the effects of family and domestic violence
- using children to send messages
- using visitation rights to harass the victim or threatening to take children away

Get in touch

Our priority is ensuring you stay safe.

To ensure we can provide the support you need, we encourage all customers to contact us on 13 88 08, enquiry@help.simplyenergy.com.au or via our webchat as soon as possible.

We have a specialist Customer Advocacy Team that is able to provide you with support that is tailored to your particular circumstances.

Our Customer Advocacy Team has received training on our family violence policy and processes and have the skills to;

- Provide you with assistance in line with our family violence policy and the relevant regulations;
- Assess your financial situation and provide you with tailored payment assistance options as required.
- Identify signs or signals of family violence and engage safely, appropriately and compassionately with you.
- Support you in an accessible, inclusive and non-discriminatory way and use non-judgemental and non-victim blaming language.
- Understand how overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation may impact some members of the community.
- Help you to access specialist family violence services that can provide crisis support.

We are committed to making sure that relevant team members maintain their understanding of how to assist customers affected by family violence. We provide training to new staff members at the time of onboarding with Simply Energy. We also provide ongoing training to the Customer Advocacy Team, all other call centre staff, managers of relevant call centre staff, and all people responsible for the systems and processes that are used for interacting with customers. This training ensures that our relevant staff are able to:

- Understand the nature and consequences of family violence
- Effectively and appropriately identify and engage with customers affected by family violence
- Assist customers affected by family violence in line with this policy and the relevant regulations.

We develop our family violence training internally and may also work with experienced external providers to design specialised family violence training for our staff.

What happens when you contact us?

If we identify you may be affected by family violence, our call centre staff are trained to transfer you to our Customer Advocacy Team, our specialist team who have been trained to assist customers affected by family violence.

Customers may not always openly tell us that they are affected by family violence. Our staff are trained to recognise signs or signals of family violence and respond to this scenario on a case-by-case basis. Our staff will handle these situations with empathy, sensitivity and care, and direct customers to resources or services that could be helpful. For example, our call centre staff may offer to transfer you to our Customer Advocacy Team, inform you about this policy and the support available, make a note on your account, or inform you about free external support services.

If you contact us through other channels, our Customer Advocacy Team will be in touch via your preferred method of communication.

We will not ask for evidence before providing you support

We will not require that you provide documentary evidence of family violence as a pre-condition to receiving the support set out in this policy.

We will add extra security on your account

We understand that discussing the experience of family violence can be traumatic and repeatedly discussing your experience may threaten your safety and the security of your account. That is why we have developed a process to safeguard your account and avoid the need for you to repeatedly inform us of your experiences with family violence.

Once we have identified that you are affected by family violence, we will offer to add a Pin identifier to your account that only allows you to access the account. We will also offer to flag your account so that our call centre agents can easily identify that you are entitled to additional support. We also have the capability to directly transfer you to the Customer Advocacy Team any time that you call us.

We will identify your preferred method of communication

Our Customer Advocacy Team will work with you to identify and agree to a preferred method of communication. This preference will be recorded on your account and used for all forms of communication in relation to your account.

This may include a preference that all communication be through a third-party support worker.

We will provide you payment assistance if you need it

Our Customer Advocacy Team will discuss whether you are experiencing difficulties in paying your bills and require additional support. We will explain the different forms of support that are available in our Hardship Policy and will help you access support that you may be entitled to. For example, customers in our hardship program will be provided:

- Information on if there is a better energy plan for them
- Ideas about how to reduce your energy use
- Payment arrangements that include a payment amount and frequency that suits your circumstances.

You can view our Hardship Policy by state, which has more detail on the support that is available: <https://www.simplyenergy.com.au/help-centre/billing-and-payment/financial-support>

Other payment-related assistance that we will provide includes:

- In addition to our standard payment methods, we will also allow you to use Centrepay as a payment option if you request it.
- We will waive any late payment fees payable under your contract with us.
- We will tell you about government concessions, relief schemes or energy rebates you may be able to receive
- We may refer you to a financial counsellor if appropriate, however this is not a precondition of receiving payment assistance.

Additional financial assistance will be provided

We understand that energy debt can be the result of financial abuse from a perpetrator. Our Customer Advocacy Team will consider whether other people have responsibility for the energy debt on your account.

We know that debt recovery action has a significant impact on our customers and may be traumatic for our customers that are affected by family violence. Before taking any debt recovery action, we will take into account your circumstances, including the potential impact this action would have on you.

De-energisation for non-payment would only be arranged if it will not cause harm

In limited circumstances, we may arrange for de-energisation of a customer's premises if they have not paid a bill by the due date or, if the customer is on a payment plan, has not adhered to the terms of the plan.

We recognise that de-energisation can be particularly stressful for you and may affect your safety in a family violence situation. We would only arrange for the de-energisation of your premises if we have formed a view that it would not cause you any harm.

Our contract will not be breached if we are providing you family violence support

There may be instances where we are unable to fulfil an obligation under our energy contract with you when we are providing you support in line with this policy. There may also be instances where you are unable to fulfil an obligation under our energy contract when using your preferred method of communication.

In all these instances, this policy will take precedence and there will be no breach of our energy contract.

When do you no longer receive support under this policy?

We will continue to provide you support under this policy until you inform us that you no longer require it.

Additional Support Services

If you are in danger, call 000.

Although Simply Energy is not able to provide you with crisis family violence support, we will refer you to support services at a time that is safe, respectful and appropriate.

There are also several free external support services that are available, below is a list of some of these services:

- **1800 RESPECT** – is the national domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support service.

Phone: 1800 737 732

Website: www.1800respect.org.au/

- **Rainbow Door** – is a free, specialist LGBTIQ+ helpline. Experienced peers provide information, referral, and support to enable LGBTIQ+ people, their friends, and their families to navigate the system and access the supports they need within a safe environment
Phone: 1800 729 367

Website: <https://www.switchboard.org.au/rainbow-door>

- **The Orange Door** – is a Victorian service that helps Victorians affected by family violence get the support they need quickly and easily.
Phone: Differs between locations, find a service near you here – <https://www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/find-a-service-near-you>

- **National Debt Helpline** – is a not-for-profit service that offers a free, independent and confidential financial counselling service.

Phone: 1800 007 007

Website: <https://ndh.org.au/>

or locate a financial counsellor based in your area <https://moneysmart.gov.au/managing-debt/financial-counselling>

Privacy

We will comply with all relevant privacy legislation in relation to your personal information. We will ensure that we do not disclose, or provide access, to your information to any other person without your consent, except to the extent that this is required by law. This may include where we are compelled to provide information about customers to the government, police, or regulators and other government agencies. We are also legally obliged to share contact information (names and phone numbers) with electricity distribution businesses for the purposes of their role to maintain the supply of essential electricity supply.

You can find a summary of our privacy policy on our website www.simplyenergy.com.au/privacy. If you have any questions, you can contact our Privacy Officer at privacy@help.simplyenergy.com.au.

Policy

This Family Violence Policy is effective from 1 May 2023 and will be formally reviewed at least once every 2 years. This formal review does not preclude us from reviewing the policy at more regular intervals, should this be necessary, such as to maintain consistency with leading practice. Following a review, an updated policy will be placed on the Simply Energy website at <https://www.simplyenergy.com.au/help-centre/policies-and-commitments/family-violence>

During a formal review, we will assess the policy against the relevant regulatory requirements and the latest best practice support for customers affected by family violence. We may also engage with relevant advocacy groups and those with lived experience to ensure the policy clearly explains the support available and is written in plain, inclusive, and sensitive language.

The policy is designed with oversight and endorsement from Simply Energy's senior leadership and is a resource promoted across the organisation.

We are also committed to continually improving our processes. We assess the quality of ongoing training and staff, as well as our compliance with the relevant regulatory requirements. We also collect and use customer and staff feedback on our family violence policy and processes to help us improve.

Note: The Energy Retail Code of Practice, which sets out retailers' obligations and minimum customer entitlements Victoria, takes precedence over this policy in all circumstances. In QLD, NSW, ACT and SA the National Energy Retail Rules will not take precedence over this policy.

Feedback & Complaints

We understand that sometime things don't turn out as expected, here at Simply Energy we want to fix it. If a customer wishes to submit feedback or lodge a complaint this can be done by:

Contacting our Customer Care team on 13 88 08, Contacting us online at <https://www.simplyenergy.com.au/contact-us> or, Writing to us at GPO Box 4408, Melbourne, Victoria 3001.

For full information on Simply Energy's Complaints and Dispute Resolution Policy please visit <https://www.simplyenergy.com.au/help-centre/policies-and-commitments/dispute-resolution>

If you are not satisfied with the outcome and would like to pursue the matter further, you may contact the Energy and Water Ombudsman in your state or territory.

Name of ombudsman	Phone	Website
Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON)	1800 246 545	https://www.ewon.com.au/
Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria (EWOV)	1800 500 509	https://www.ewov.com.au/
Energy and Water Ombudsman South Australia (EWOSA)	1800 665 565	https://ewosa.com.au/
Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ)	1800 662 837	https://www.ewoq.com.au/
Energy and Water Ombudsman Western Australia	1800 754 004	https://energyandwater.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/
Australian Capital Territory Civil & Administrative Tribunal (ACAT)	(02) 6207 1740	https://www.acat.act.gov.au/

Translation Services

For TTY assistance, please use one of the following 24-hour relay call numbers:

- TTY/voice calls: 133 677
- Speak & Listen: 1300 555 727
- SMS relay: 0423 677 767

Simply Energy offers a free translation service for customers who do not speak English. Call 1300 408 265 for assistance.



Interpreter Service 1300 408 265 - 8:00am to 7:00pm, Mon – Fri AEST

TTY Service 1800 555 630 - 8:00am to 6:00pm, Mon - Fri AEST

Per il servizio interpreti chiamare il numero indicato sopra.

للحصول على خدمات الترجمة الشفهية إتصل بالرقم المدرج أعلاه.

Για υπηρεσία διερμηνέων, τηλεφωνήστε στον παραπάνω αριθμό.

Para comunicarse con el servicio de interpretación llame al número indicado arriba.

Muốn liên lạc với sở thông dịch, xin vui lòng gọi số điện thoại trên đây.

如需口译服务, 请通过以上电话联系。

如需口译服務, 請撥打以上電話。