

FAMILY VIOLENCE POLICY

JURISDICTION: NATIONAL

Policy Reference M2E 150-100

Version 0.2

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Version Control

Version	Summary of changes
0.1	High Level Draft
0.2	Revised Draft
1.0	Final 27 November 2019

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Policy Statement

We aim to be an exceptional service provider who believe our people are the difference and who put customers first and benefit the community.

Through leadership we will drive best-practice support and training for our staff and implement processes for customers who are affected by family violence and recognise our responsibility to help reduce the impact of this issue in our communities.

This Policy outlines how we seek to meet our responsibilities for customers experiencing or affected by family violence. To achieve this, when dealing with customers experiencing or affected by family violence, we are committed to:

- Recognising individuals impacted by Family Violence, also understand this is not limited to physical violence and may include;
 - Economic abuse, and/or
 - Emotional abuse, and/or
 - Psychological abuse
- Providing a sensitive and careful response and working with affected customers to achieve the best outcomes with their accounts.
- Empowering customers, to manage the financial requirements to meet needs within our Financial Hardship Policies, security of their data, and future account management in a manner that provides them with outcomes which meet their needs and supports them to move forward.
- Providing a safe environment for customers to access relevant information and support.
- Ensuring we have reached an agreement to provide communication types which will provide our customer with confidence the information to and from us is secured as much as possible using their preferred method of correspondence if available.

Purpose

To outline our approach in dealing with and supporting customers experiencing and/or affected by Family Violence.

Objectives

Our Family Violence Policy will inform customers of our decisions and actions when they are experiencing or affected by family violence.

This policy will also ensure we meet the obligations outlined in the Essential Services Commissions' Energy Retail Code which requires M2 Energy to have a Family Violence Policy.

Scope

This Policy applies to customers who self-identify, or are identified by an independent financial counsellor or case worker, as being affected by family violence.

Our commitment

Our Guiding Principles:

1. The psychological and/or physical wellbeing of people affected by Family Violence will be our priority;
2. People who are affected by Family Violence, either directly or indirectly, will be provided with support that is sensitive, respectful and non-judgmental;
3. Our customer care team will be accessible for our customers, and provide services flexible enough to respond to an individual's needs; and
4. Any personal information will be managed privately and sensitively.

Customers

We will:

- Case-manage customers affected by family violence on an individual basis with consideration given to:
 - payment arrangements
 - deferment of debt,
 - allocation of debt and
 - debt collection activities

For Energy customers, Account management under our Energy Assistance Program and our Financial Hardship Policies will allow us to provide customers access to Utility Relief Grants applications, eligible concessions and information on how customers can participate in managing any arrears and ongoing costs;

- Our staff will ensure that any concerns related to jointly responsible accounts (if applicable) will be reviewed with a view to allocate overdue amounts appropriately,
- Ensure information pertaining to customers affected by family violence is handled securely and confidentially;
- Provide correspondence in communications in a customer preferred method, if requested and practicable;
- Ensure processes are in place to avoid customers having to repeat disclosure of their family violence, and provides for continuity of service for customers affected by family violence;
- Provide information to customers on our support programs including energy efficiency, dispute resolution processes and any other energy assistance that is practicable;
- Refer customers who may be affected by family violence to specialist family violence services, 1800Respect can be contacted by calling the 24hr support and counselling line 1800 737 732 or by visiting their website <https://www.1800respect.org.au/>;
- Ensure customers are provided support under this policy for as long as required
- Publish this policy and referral points on our website, provide a copy of this policy to a customer on request; and
- Implement the Essential Services Commission's Family Violence requirements.

We will not:

- Ask customers for any form of evidence to demonstrate the circumstances of being affected by Family Violence, except in the event recovery of arrears is required and this information will support any recovery arrangements or halt any disconnections of supply or service.

Strategy implementation

This policy will be implemented via a cross-business, internal training group, coordinated by the Vocus Group Customer Service Management team. The policy and training will be reported quarterly up to and post implementation of the Policy to the Learning & Development and Operations Manager

All new customer facing staff will be provided full training in this policy and the application of the available assistance and refreshers will be scheduled for all staff on an annual basis.

Roles and responsibilities

The Vocus Group Executive Leadership Team is responsible for incorporating our responsibilities under this policy into our business planning activities.

The General Manager Energy Products and Operations Manager Power & Gas are responsible for directing, reviewing and reporting upon the implementation of the Family Violence Policy regarding customers.

The Operations Manager Power & Gas is responsible for directing, reviewing and reporting upon the implementation of the Family Violence Policy regarding employee outcomes.

All employees are responsible for developing and understanding how their work functions are affected by this Policy.

References

Energy Assistance Program Policy

Financial Hardship Policy

Review process

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years, or as required by regulatory changes, by the Operations Manager, Operational Compliance Lead and Regulatory & Compliance Manager- Telco.

Approved Nov/19

Next due for review Nov/21

Dodo Contact details

Mon-Fri 8am-6pm AEST	
Dodo Main Hotline	133 636
Financial Hardship Enquiries	1300 907 283
Energy Assistance Program Level 2	1300 442 916 or 02 9133 5531
DPG Complaints	1300 374 733 or 02 9133 5402

Commander contact details

Mon-Fri 8am-6pm AEST	
Commander Main Hotline	132 777
Commander Customer Service – Care	133 914
Energy Assistance Program	133 914
CPG Complaints	1300 052 062 or 02 9133 5847
Email	Cpg.customercare@commander.com

iPrimus contact details

Mon-Fri 9am-8pm AEST	
iPrimus Main Hotline	131 789

Appendix 1

The following assistance programs are available to qualifying customers living in Australia.

Dodo, iPrimus & Commander trains staff members to identify that eligible customers are receiving all available assistance and to advise customers of what additional assistance is available. Staff members also, as required, help customers apply for any rebates or assistance schemes available.

Assistance Available in Victoria

Victorian State Government Concessions

- Annual Electricity Concession
- Winter Gas Concession
- Off Peak Electricity Concession
- Electricity transfer fee waiver
- Service to property charge concession
- Group Homes Concession
- Life Support Concession
- Medical Cooling Concession
- Excess Electricity Concession
- Excess Gas Concession

Victorian Special Assistance schemes

- Utility Relief Grant Scheme (URGS)
- The Non-Mains Utility Relief Grant Scheme
- Victorian Energy Saver
 - Gas Heater Rebate
- Gas Hot Water Rebate

Other assistance that may be available

- No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) and StepUP Low-Interest Loans
- MoneyHelp financial advice

Assistance Available in Australian Capital Territory

Australian Capital Territory Government Concessions

- Summer Concession
- Winter Concession
- Life Support Rebate

Australian Capital Territory Special Assistance schemes

- The ESCC hardship discharge policy

Assistance Available in New South Wales

New South Wales State Government Concessions

- Low Income Electricity Rebate
- Family Energy Rebate (from July 2012)
- Life Support Rebate(s)
- Medical Energy Rebate

New South Wales Special Assistance schemes

- Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) vouchers

Assistance Available in South Australia

South Australian State Government Concessions

- Energy Concession (pension)
- Energy Concession (beneficiaries)

South Australian Special Assistance schemes

- Solar Hot Water Rebate

Assistance Available in Queensland

Queensland State Government Concessions

- Electricity Concession
- Electricity Life Support Concession
- Pensioner Gas Rebate
- Queensland Senior Card holders rebate

Queensland Special Assistance schemes

- Home Energy Emergency Assistance scheme (HEEAS)
- Hot Water Rebate
- Stove Rebates

Commonwealth Schemes

- Energy Supplement

- Essential Medical Equipment Payment