



**Keeping connected**



Do you need assistance in relation to this document?

Call us on 13 13 53 to arrange an interpreter.

需要有人幫助翻譯這份文件嗎？請撥打 **13 13 53** 讓我們來安排一位翻譯。

Avez-vous besoin d'aide par rapport à ce document?

Téléphonez-nous au 13 13 53 pour organiser un interprète.

Benötigen Sie e beim Ausfüllen dieses Dokuments Hilfe?  
Rufen Sie 13 13 53 an, um einen Dolmetscher zu bestellen.

Serve aiuto con questo documento?

Chiamateci al 13 13 53 per richiedere un interprete.

Cần giúp đỡ để dịch tài liệu này, xin gọi chúng  
tôi số 13 13 53 để sắp xếp một thông dịch viên  
cho bạn.

هل تحتاج الى مساعدة لترجمة وثيقة ؟ أتصل  
بنا على الرقم 131353 وستحصل بمساعدتنا  
على من يقدم لك خدمات الترجمة الشفوية.

Χρειάζεστε βοήθεια με το έγγραφο αυτό; Καλέστε μας  
στο 13 13 53 για να κανονίσουμε διερμηνέα.

需要有人帮助翻译这份文件吗？请拨打 **13 13 53** 让我们来安排一位翻译。

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# At Synergy we want to support you through difficult times.

And we understand that sometimes, it's difficult to pay bills on time. That's why we've developed the *Keeping Connected* program – a service designed to help you manage your electricity bills, avoid long term debt and keep your electricity connected.

Together, we can find an appropriate payment solution to help you through difficult times. All we ask is that you keep us informed of your circumstances and consider the advice offered to you by other agencies.

We are committed to offering support whilst honouring our commercial responsibilities. We welcome feedback and continue to review the program, ensuring it remains fair and supportive of those experiencing financial hardship.

And we understand that it can be difficult to ask for support. We are here to help and encourage you to contact us if you need to, you will always be treated with fairness, dignity and compassion.

**James K. Mitchell**

*Managing Director*



You will always be treated with fairness, dignity and compassion.

## Our commitment to you.

The *Keeping Connected* program is designed to assist customers experiencing real financial hardship by offering a range of payment options and management strategies.

It's important that we continue to review and adapt our service to accommodate different circumstances. So, to improve our understanding of the complex issues surrounding financial difficulty, we work with WACOSS (West Australian Council of Social Service), the Office of Energy, the Energy Ombudsman, Economic Regulation Authority, financial counsellors and other relevant stakeholders.

To understand the basis of the principles and commitments we make in *Keeping Connected* you can also read our Standard Electricity Agreement, our Customer Charter and the Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers (2008), which set out the general rights of customers and retailer obligations.

## What is financial hardship?

Financial hardship describes the difficulty faced by individuals and families who struggle to meet a range of normal living expenses—food, rent, mortgage repayments or common bills.

If paying your electricity bill affects your ability to meet basic living expenses, you may be deemed to be in financial hardship and could be eligible for our *Keeping Connected* program.

## Can we help?

If you're a residential customer facing financial hardship, you could be eligible for our *Keeping Connected* program. And we'd like to help.

It's important that you contact us as soon as you begin to experience financial difficulty. That way, we can assess your eligibility for our program, understand how much you can pay and work out an appropriate solution.

When we assess your eligibility for the program, we consider:

- your total income, after tax (your take home pay)
- the number of children or dependants involved
- your current financial commitments, including any existing debt
- previous financial history with Synergy
- medical conditions or disability
- family circumstances
- presence of domestic violence
- your eligibility for Government-funded concessions – such as Health Care Card, Centrelink benefit, or pension, and
- advice given to you by an independent financial counsellor or agency and relevant stakeholders.

Of course, you can trust that we will always assess your individual circumstances in confidence, with fairness, dignity and compassion.

# Keeping you connected.

The *Keeping Connected* program has been designed to assist you by:

- offering a range of payment options
- helping to manage your electricity bill and keep you connected, and
- providing incentives to help maintain payment plans.

Throughout the course of the program, you have the right to:

- receive information on alternative payment arrangements and methods to enable you to make smaller, more manageable payments over time
- receive information on the *Keeping Connected* program
- nominate the amount you pay on an arranged payment plan
- renegotiate the amount you pay on an arranged payment plan when your circumstances change
- receive information on any debt owed to Synergy
- redirect your bill to an alternative mailing address
- contact the Energy Ombudsman
- receive information on any independent financial and counselling services available in your area, and
- use a language interpreter service at no cost to you.

We can also offer suggestions on how to reduce your electricity consumption to lower future electricity bills.

If you have any fees and charges owing from previous bills, you can apply to have them reduced, in accordance with the State Government Energy Rebate Scheme.

And as long as you make regular payments on an agreed plan, you won't incur any additional interest, fees or debt recovery costs. Your electricity will stay connected and legal action will not be taken.

## Your commitment to us.

If you're facing financial difficulty we'll do our best to assist you. And in return, we ask that you:

- contact us as soon as you begin to experience financial difficulty
- agree on a reasonable payment arrangement and method
- seek guidance from a financial counsellor, and
- contact us to request an alternative arrangement if you are having difficulty meeting the agreed payment plan.

It's important to meet with a person from a relevant consumer representative organisation to discuss your financial situation and consider your options. Then we may temporarily suspend any debt recovery or disconnection action for at least fourteen days, while the organisation assesses your capacity to pay.

If you do not make the agreed payments, and can't agree to an alternative arrangement, your electricity may be disconnected and debt recovery costs incurred. Remember, this could be easily avoided by keeping in contact with us, making agreed payments and working with us toward a positive outcome.

## Support.

Our customer assistance team are trained to be sensitive and supportive when assisting customers who may be experiencing financial difficulties. They are able to provide information about:

- the services available to you,
- Government-funded concession and financial assistance schemes
- our legal responsibilities
- the *Keeping Connected* program, and
- procedures relating to credit management practices.

Of course, you can trust that our team will always handle your calls in confidence, with fairness, dignity and compassion.

## Frequently asked questions.

### **How long can I stay on the *Keeping Connected* program?**

How long you stay on the program is dependent on your individual circumstances. We'll keep you up to date on your progress throughout the duration of the program. And we'll inform you when you've paid in full.

### **Can I pay my account off in instalments?**

Simply call 13 13 53 and depending on your individual circumstances, we can set up a revised payment agreement which works as a payment extension. If we enter into a payment agreement with you we will send out an instalment bill 2-3 days before it is due. If you do not make payment and do not contact us we will send you a reminder, before taking any further action.

### **How long do I have to pay before I am disconnected?**

We work in accordance with the guidelines stated in the electricity Code of Conduct, which advise that we can disconnect power if payment has not been received 12 business days after the due date of the account. This is the minimum timescale we work to and if you are experiencing payment difficulties we encourage you to contact us so we can discuss your specific circumstances and come to an arrangement.

### **What are your account payment options?**

We have different payment options available such as: paying online, over the phone, via Direct Debit, in person at the Synergy head office at Australia Post or at authorised retailers. We can help you to select the best payment option for you – simply call 13 13 53 or visit [synergy.net.au/payments](http://synergy.net.au/payments)

## **I am currently receiving Centrelink benefits, do you offer a rebate on my account?**

Yes, rebates are provided under the State Government Energy Rebate Scheme for various charges on your electricity account.

You can also apply to make regular payments on your electricity bill through Centrepay. By signing up for this free direct bill paying service you can pay your Synergy bill in instalments, direct from your Centrelink payment.

Contact 13 13 53 to find out more.

## **What if I have been disconnected?**

If you have been disconnected please contact us immediately so that we can help you manage your electricity account and get reconnected as soon as possible.

## **What if I become bankrupt?**

If you're facing bankruptcy for the first time, you'll receive the same treatment as any other customer, remain on the same electricity tariff and receive the same billing and payment terms.

Of course, we'll cancel any debt incurred prior to your date of bankruptcy. However, we encourage you to contact us and arrange an easier payment plan through the Keeping Connected program.

## **Can I have a pre-paid meter?**

Unfortunately, Synergy is unable to provide pre-payment meters, due to current restrictions under the Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers (2008).

# We'd like to hear from you.

We encourage feedback from our customers, our staff, our stakeholders and our associates. It's our way of ensuring the Keeping Connected program remains fair and supportive of people experiencing financial hardship. We also keep track of any financial hardship issues and initiatives occurring interstate and overseas.

If you'd like to offer your feedback or you would like more information about Keeping Connected, you can contact us on the following details.

## **Phone**

Free call 1800 208 254 (mobiles charged at applicable rates) or 13 13 53 (within WA). Our contact centre hours are 7am to 7pm (WA local time), weekdays. For customers outside WA please call (08) 6212 2222 between 8am and 5pm (WA local time), weekdays. TTY (text telephone for customers with hearing or speech difficulties) please call (08) 9221 8608 between 8am and 5pm (WA local times), weekdays.

## **Mail**

PO Box K851, Perth WA 6842

## **Email**

[credit.custsrv@synergy.net.au](mailto:credit.custsrv@synergy.net.au)

## **Fax**

(08) 9221 4628

## **Over the counter service**

The customer service area is open from 8am to 5pm (WA local time), weekdays. 228 Adelaide Terrace, Perth, Western Australia.

## **Language assistance**

TIS National 13 14 50

## **Internet**

[synergy.net.au](http://synergy.net.au)

