

DISCONNECTION AND RECONNECTION POLICY

1 PURPOSE

This policy sets out the principles and processes for disconnection and reconnection of customers in accordance with the National Energy Retail Law (NERL), the National Energy Retail Rules (NERR), and Australian Energy Regulator (AER) guidelines, including protections for vulnerable customers.

2 SCOPE

This policy applies to all residential and small business customers, including customers affected by hardship, life support needs, or family violence.

3 PRINCIPLES

- Disconnection is a last resort after reasonable steps to engage the customer.
- Reconnections are prioritised and completed within required timeframes.
- Customer protections, particularly for vulnerable and affected customers, are paramount.

4 DISCONNECTION

4.1 Grounds for Disconnection

A customer's premises may only be disconnected for the following reasons:

- Non-payment of a bill, following issue of reminder and disconnection notices.
- Failure to pay a required security deposit.
- Denying access to the meter for over 12 months.
- Illegal use of energy.
- Failure to enter into a customer contract (move-in/carry-over customers).

4.2 Process Before Disconnection

The following steps must be completed before disconnection:

- A Reminder Notice must be issued no earlier than 14 business days after a missed payment.
- A Disconnection Warning Notice must be issued no earlier than 6 business days after the Reminder Notice.
- The customer must be provided with clear information on assistance options (e.g., hardship programs, payment plans).
- If the customer is a hardship customer, or affected by family violence, disconnection must not occur unless all additional protections have been applied.

4.3 Restrictions on Disconnection

Customers must not be disconnected:

- Where a valid life support registration exists.
- If the customer is actively participating in a hardship program or payment plan.
- On a Friday, weekend, public holiday, or the day before a public holiday.
- Solely because of non-payment related to family violence.

5 PROTECTIONS FOR VULNERABLE CUSTOMERS

5.1 Life Support Customers

- Life support customers must not be disconnected without complying with life support registration and notification obligations.
- A minimum 4 business days' written notice must be provided.

5.2 Hardship Customers

- Disconnection of hardship customers must only occur if all assistance options under the Hardship Policy have been exhausted.
- Customers must be offered flexible and sustainable payment arrangements.

5.3 Customers Affected by Family Violence

- The safety of the customer must be prioritised in all dealings.
- No documentary evidence of family violence will be required.
- Affected customers must not be disconnected solely for debt incurred due to family violence.
- Personal information of affected customers must be protected and not disclosed without consent.

6 RECONNECTION

Where a customer has been disconnected, and the disconnection ground has been resolved:

- The retailer must arrange for reconnection by the next business day following payment or agreement to a reconnection plan.
- If reconnection does not occur within this timeframe, the retailer must escalate the matter internally and inform the customer of the expected timeline.

7 EXPLICIT INFORMED CONSENT

Where required, explicit informed consent must be obtained prior to disconnection.

8 COMPLIANCE AND REPORTING

- Any wrongful disconnections must be reported to the AER in line with the AER Compliance Procedures and Guidelines.
- Records of disconnection and reconnection activities must be maintained for audit and compliance purposes.

9 RESPONSIBILITIES

All customer-facing staff, billing teams, and authorised agents must comply with this policy.

10 REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if required by changes to legislation, regulation, or AER guidelines.