



## COVID-19 Fact Sheet

### State Government support for households in response to COVID-19

#### Freeze on all household tariffs, fees and charges

Due to the unprecedented economic implications of COVID-19, increases to household tariffs, fees and charges will be frozen in 2020-21.

**The freeze applies to the entire 'household basket' of State Government fees and charges to provide relief to Western Australian families in response to COVID-19. The measure will keep \$402 million in the pockets of households to support the local economy.**

The following household tariffs, fees and charges will not increase effective 1 July 2020:

- residential electricity tariffs (both supply and consumption);
- residential water charges (annual supply, consumption, wastewater, and drainage);
- public transport fares;
- drivers licence fees;
- motor vehicle licence charges;
- motor vehicle licence recording fee;
- motor injury insurance premiums; and
- the Emergency Services Levy.

Previously, the Budget included an increase of \$127 (or 2%) across these fees and charges in 2020-21 for the average household. The last time the 'household basket' of fees and charges was frozen was in 2004-05.

#### Energy Assistance Payment

**The State Government has doubled the Energy Assistance Payment in 2020-21 to \$610 to provide additional support to vulnerable Western Australians.**

From May 2020, a one-off \$305 payment will be provided to Energy Assistance Payment (EAP) and Energy Concession Extension Scheme (ECES) recipients to provide additional support to vulnerable Western Australians. This is in addition to the existing credit of up to \$305 paid over the course of the year.

This EAP boost is expected to cost \$116 million, and will provide immediate electricity bill relief to existing EAP and ECES recipients and any other person who becomes eligible for a concession card before 30 September 2020.

Eligible recipients include holders of a Centrelink Health Care card, Pensioner or Seniors Concession card, or Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold, Pensioner or Seniors card.

Customers serviced by Synergy or Horizon Power who already receive the EAP will automatically receive the additional payment as a lump-sum credit to electricity bills from May 2020. New EAP applications should be made direct to [Synergy](#) or [Horizon Power](#).

Customers that do not have a direct billing relationship with an electricity retailer, such as residents of retirements villages, caravan parks or apartment complexes, will have the ECES payment directly credited to a nominated bank account. Applications should be made to the Office of State Revenue (for more information, refer to the Department of Finance website [www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-finance](http://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-finance)).

### **Additional support for households impacted by COVID-19**

A number of other support measures for households have been announced in response to COVID-19, which will be in place until 30 September 2020, and reviewed when necessary.

#### **No utility disconnections**

The State Government has also announced that no Western Australian household or small business facing financial difficulty due to COVID-19 will have their electricity or water services disconnected due to late payments. In addition, no interest will be charged on deferred electricity bill payments.

#### **Alternative tax payment arrangements**

Households that are directly or indirectly impacted by COVID-19 may also apply for an interest-free payment arrangement and for late payment penalties to be waived for transfer duty, landholder duty, vehicle licence duty or land tax.

#### **Keystart customers experiencing hardship**

Keystart customers facing financial hardship due to COVID-19 can apply to defer principal repayments and waive interest costs by up to six months. Assistance will be assessed on a case-by-case basis in line with Keystart's Hardship Assessment policy. This will mean, for example, a customer borrowing \$350,000 over a 30-year loan can defer estimated repayments of \$10,690 over six months, or \$1,781 per month. The interest saving over a six-month period is around \$7,000 for newly established loans.

#### **Social housing eligibility**

Payments in response to COVID-19 made to public housing and community housing tenants of the State and Federal Governments, whether one-off payments or increases to statutory payments, will not be included in eligibility assessments for social housing, and will not be included in the 25% of assessable income used for rent calculation purposes.