



## TRUenergy NSW Hardship Payment Plan Options

---



---

## TRUenergy NSW Payment Plan options

Date Issued: September 2007



## TRUenergy NSW Payment Plans Options

---

### Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Purpose .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>TRUenergy Payment Extension programs .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Customer communication and payment plans .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Taking into account a customer's capacity to pay .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Early detection of customers in hardship .....</b>	<b>5</b>
	4.1 Helping Customers Self Identify .....	5
	4.2 TRUenergy's early detection of customers in hardship	

### 1 PURPOSE

TRUenergy has a proud record in providing assistance to customers who may be at risk of financial hardship. The provision of payment extensions and plans forms a key element of our approach to providing support to our customers during difficult times.

This document outlines the type of payment extension programs available to customers to assist them in maintaining a stable and secure energy supply.

TRUenergy is highly flexible in offering payment extensions, though some limited criteria apply. Where a customer is experiencing severe financial hardship, referrals are made to TRUenergy's Customer Welfare Team who will utilise all elements of our Hardship Assistance Policy.

### 2 TRUENERGY PAYMENT EXTENSION PROGRAMS

We understand that customers on low incomes or those who experience a change in financial circumstances may be vulnerable to energy related hardship. TRUenergy has in place a range of payment plan options to help customers in such circumstances:

#### 2.1 Payment extensions

Payment arrangements are short term extensions established when the customer advises they can pay the account prior to the next account being issued but cannot pay the current account in full by the Due By Date. Payment extensions / arrangements allow the customer the flexibility to pay-off the account in either a lump sum or instalments prior to the next bill being issued.

This arrangement is usually offered to customers that experience short-term financial difficulty as a result of an unexpected but short-term change in income and/or expenditure.

## TRUenergy NSW Payment Plans Options

---

### 2.2 Flexi Easyway Plan

The Flexi Easyway does not require a set payment amount or date. Rather, it allows customers, within a payment cycle (being three months for electricity and two months for gas) to make payments at an amount they choose and on a date they decide.

The expectation under this plan is that when a customer receives a bill, they pay the outstanding debt in full by the due date. This arrangement is usually offered to customers that experience inconsistent income and expenditure flows and would like to make payments on their energy accounts in periods which they are appropriate with their budget circumstances. It also allows these customers the opportunity to reduce the impact of receiving a lumpy electricity and gas bill every quarter or two-months respectively.

### 2.3 Budget Easyway

A Budget Easyway plan is a more structured payment plan. Payments are made by customers at agreed amounts and on agreed days either monthly or fortnightly. The Budget Easyway plan can be established Generally for a minimum of 2 months but ordinarily for a 12 month period. Easyway plans are not established for longer than a 1-year period.

The Budget Easyway plan is designed generally to assist customers to budget for the cost of their energy use and any accumulated arrears over a 12 month period to assist them to manage the peaks and lows of their energy use, taking into account their capacity to pay and other regulatory requirements.

## **3 CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION AND PAYMENT PLANS**

Where customers establish a Budget Easyway or Flexi Easyway plan, a card providing payment dates and payment methods is sent to them shortly after contacting TRUenergy.

We find this assists customers understand their payment commitments and also helps with budgeting needs.

Where a customer does not adhere to the payment plan, customers are initially sent a letter advising them their plan is at risk of closing. If there is still no further payment from the customer and they do not contact us

---

## TRUenergy NSW Payment Plans Options

---

to discuss their circumstances, further notification is sent advising customers of the standard regulatory processes.

Advice is also provided regularly via energy bills of the payment methods available to customers such as centrepay, direct debit, or BPay.

### **4 TAKING INTO ACCOUNT A CUSTOMER'S CAPACITY TO PAY**

TRUenergy understands that in some circumstances additional flexibility about repayments is essential.

While customers should budget to meet the costs of their energy consumption, when setting up a payment plan, TRUenergy take into account the customer's ongoing energy consumption, any accumulated arrears and their capacity to pay.

For customers who are working with a financial counsellor, TRUenergy take into account the views and expertise of this important community group when establishing payment plans.

TRUenergy rely on the information provided by customers to establish affordable payment plans. Where there is difficulty aligning affordability with ongoing consumption, the customer may be referred to our Customer Welfare team who may seek additional information from the customer or their advocate to ensure a payment plan is sustainable and covers the customer's ongoing energy needs.

### **5 EARLY DETECTION OF CUSTOMERS IN HARDSHIP**

#### ***5.1 Helping Customers Self Identify***

TRUenergy offers customers an environment to talk about their personal circumstances and any financial difficulty they may be experiencing and to obtain access to one of our payment plan options.

While this is a challenge for any high volume customer focussed environment, we believe we are meeting the challenge of this need. To assist customers to self-identify, we provide the following:

## TRUenergy NSW Payment Plans Options

---

- We aim to promote an environment where customers feel comfortable in making contact to discuss their circumstances as early as possible.
- Send friendly reminders to customers requesting they contact us if they are having difficulty paying their bill
- Be sensitive when we are speaking to customers about any energy hardship they are facing
- Support our front-line customer facing staff with a well trained and empathetic credit management and specialist hardship team

### ***5.2 TRUenergy's early detection program***

While the overall aim of our program is for customers to self-identify when they are experiencing energy hardship, we acknowledge that customers may feel embarrassed or uncomfortable in disclosing/discussing their financial difficulties. It is for this reason as well as for practical purposes that TRUenergy utilises a range of triggers for the early detection of customers who may be experiencing financial hardship. Further details of our approach is available in TRUenergy's NSW Hardship Policy Charter.