

21 October 2020

LET'S TALK.

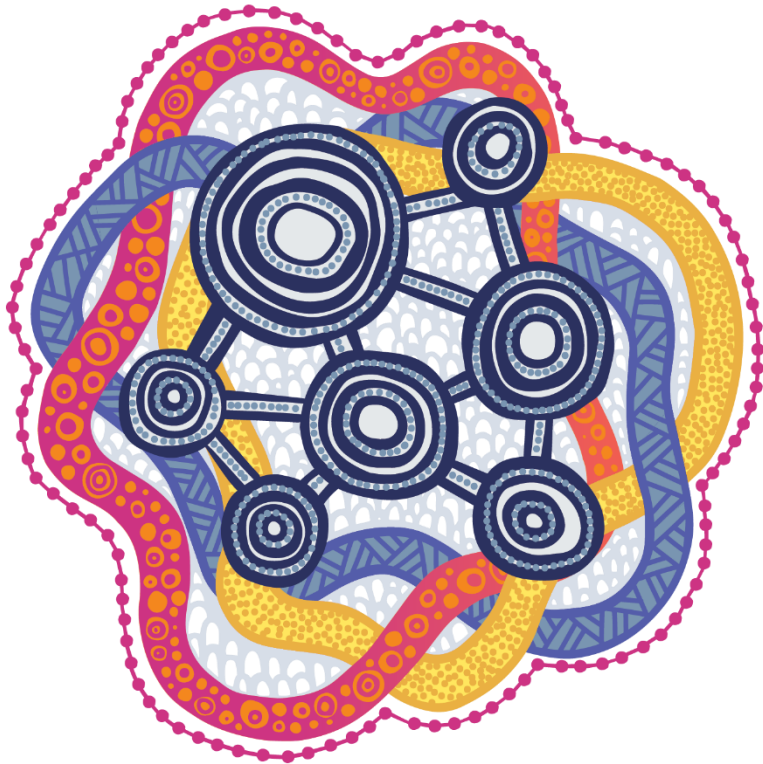
Webinar:
**Supporting
energy
consumers**



**Energy & Water
Ombudsman**
Queensland

Host: Jane Pires
Energy & Water Ombudsman

Acknowledgement of country



Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we meet today, and the lands and seas across Queensland.

We recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

**Problem
with your
energy or water
company?**

LET'S TALK.



Ombudsman
**n. An independent official who
helps consumers resolve problems**

We are a free, fair and independent dispute resolution service.

We help customers across Queensland to resolve complaints with their energy providers, as well as water providers in South East Queensland.

What we can help with



- **Arrange a hold on a disconnection or renegotiate reconnection**
- **Check a retailer has followed the disconnection rules**
- **Investigate high bills**
- **Help negotiate payment plans**
- **Investigate default listings**
- **Provide information on rebates, concessions and hardship assistance**
- **Investigate poor customer service or misleading marketing practices.**

What we can't help with

- the price of energy or water
- bottled LPG
- reticulated hot water
- solar rebates
- energy and water supply to residents of caravan parks, retirement villages and apartment buildings
(although this may change soon)

If a complaint is outside our jurisdiction, we can refer you to someone who can help!



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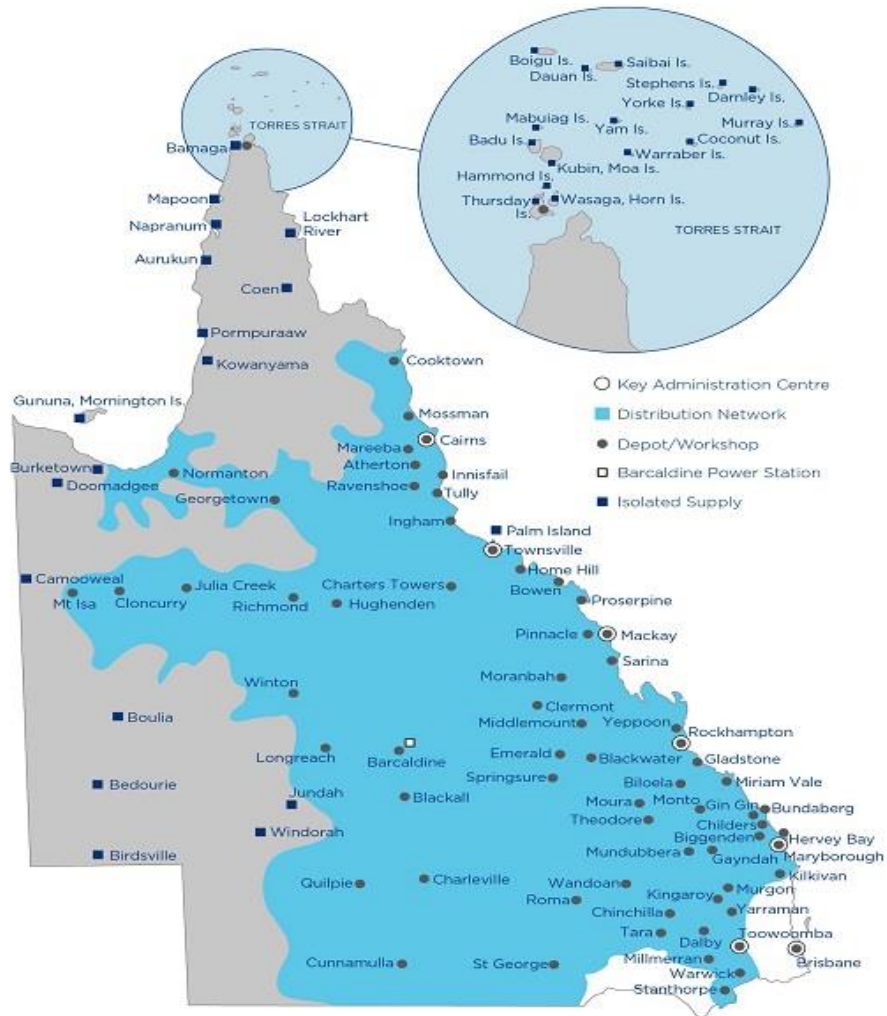


Ergon Energy Retail Rosemarie Price Manager Credit and Receipting



Part of Energy Queensland

ERGON ENERGY – REGIONAL QUEENSLAND



Ergon Energy, as a Queensland Government-owned corporation, supplies electricity to around 700,000 customers across a vast operating area of over one million square kilometres – around 97% of the state of Queensland – from the expanding coastal and rural population centres to the remote communities of outback Queensland and the Torres Strait



Vulnerable and Hardship Customer Services 1

- Flexible/tailored payment arrangements
 - Payment plans, extension of terms, direct debit, Centre pay
 - Via agents or online via My Account (with conditions)
- Specialist credit management teams
 - Short term financial Difficulties- Credit Triage team, created 2017 to service customers with early indicators of financial difficulties. Designed to prevent further financial difficulties
- Hardship program management team
 - Longer Term financial Difficulties – Customer Assist Team, created in 2006 to manage customers who have the willingness to pay bills, but not the financial capacity, due to life circumstances



Vulnerable and Hardship Customer Services 2

- HEEAS APPLICATION SUPPORT
 - Trial in conjunction with Dept of Communities to provide HEEAs application on-line
 - CAS and Triage team supporting customers to complete applications on a daily basis and offering options to either call back or give NGO details to contact in their area
- COLLABORATION WITH NGOs, COMMUNITY GROUPS
 - Distribution of quarterly e-newsletter
 - Bring your bills days at Community groups - Townsville FEAT, Rockhampton – Salvation Army and Anglicare CQ.
 - Energy and Hardship Presentations QCOSS
 - Community outreach days - supporting drought customers
- AER HARDSHIP POLICY
 - Increased protections for customers with introduction of AER standardised statements for all retailers.
 - System changes to flag customers with hardship indicators, with assessment conducted at first point of contact
 - Additional training and scripting for front line staff re hardship indicators
 - Refocus credit collection process to be overlaid with vulnerability focus
 - Introduction of increased proactive identification



Vulnerable and Hardship Customer Services 3

COVID -19

- Extra vigilance, empathy and listening by front-line staff for Hardship/payment difficulty triggers- lost/decreased income, additional family to support, reduced number of people contributing to bills, reduced/stopped payments, additional expenses, advised by customers. When accompanied by NGO rep/financial counsellor – direct transfer to Customer Assist Team
- Auto system Hardship triggers – late payments, broken arrangements, payment extension requests, disconnection, cancellation of Centrepay arrangements
- Ensure all concessions and rebates applied
- Additional training re AER requirements- offer flexible payplans with option of no payment window; increased authority levels at Contact Centre; immediate re-energisation if de-energised with no requirement for payment; all teams assessing for hardship; small business offered extended payment plans



Vulnerable Customer Programs Successfully Launched

FINANCIAL INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

- Ergon Energy Retail launched Foundation Document in Rockhampton Wednesday 20 March 2019
- FIAP supports our existing programs, refines our approach and gives us best opportunities to positively influence customers' financial inclusion and resilience.
- FIAP developed in conjunction with Good Shepherd Micro Finance
- Ergon Energy Retail FIAP has completed their foundation FIAP in July 2020, some highlights:
 - Kiosk in Woorabinda
 - Hardship Policy review
 - Creation and development of our own NGO directory
 - Energy Savvy



Vulnerable Customer Management Success

CUSTOMER INCLUSION TEAM ESTABLISHED 2017

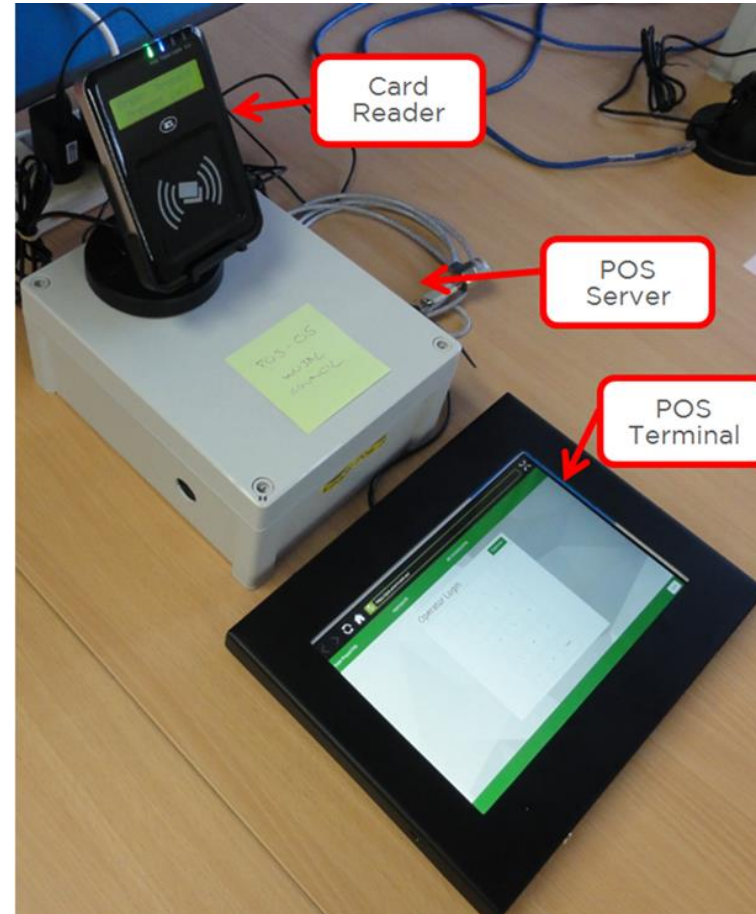
Includes management of :

- Hardship
- Rebates
- Drought scheme
- HEEAs
- Life Support
- Card Operated Meters communities
- CentrePay relationship



Card Operated Meter Project Successes

- Card Operated Meter (COM) system was established 1992 in 32 remote communities in North Queensland, servicing approx 5000 customers.
- During 2017-18, all Card Operated Meters and back office systems were upgraded to enable easier access to pay for power and to receive concessional rebates
- COM system also now have the ability to deliver GSL payments and Utility Dividend payments (QLD government)



Community Engagement Successes

- Energy Literacy Workshops in partnership with QCOSS
- Aboriginal Community regular engagement
- Bring your bills days Woorabinda
- Weather events/Disaster community Hubs support
- Community group Directory-Quarterly Customer Assist Newsletter
- EWOQ ongoing engagement
- Drought outreach program participation



Other Vulnerable Customer Support Programs

FIRST NATIONS CONNECTIONS PLAN - RAP

- Approved by Reconciliation Australia in February 2020
- Innovate RAP
- Community Engagement – Woorabinda monthly visits.
- Indigenous Procurement Policy developed
- Procurement – development of Sebenico to win tender with Energy Queensland.
- Sponsorship of Journey 2 Jobs program for Ig



Other Vulnerable Customer Support Programs

Financial Counselling Scholarship Program

- Powerlink / Ergon Energy Retail / ICAN partnership
- Scholarship for training of 7 Financial Counsellors – successful applicants from Weipa (Napranum, Mapoon and Aurukun), Mt Isa, Bowen, Port Douglas, Babinda and Cooktown
- Webinar series are recognised as professional development credit points toward personal development



Ergon Energy Retail Contact Information

CUSTOMER INCLUSION TEAM

Hardship Program and Vulnerable Customer Programs

Customer Assist Team (Hardship) 1800 670 352

NEV HOEHNE- Manager, Customer Inclusion Team

Mobile 0437 369 991

Email neville.hoehne@energyq.com.au

TRIAGE CREDIT TEAM

Residential and Small Business support

Triage Credit Team 1300 942 790

ROSEMARIE PRICE- Manager Credit and Receipting

Mobile 0438112064

Email rosemarie.price@energyq.com.au



Ergon Energy Network's COVID 19 Response

Jennifer Gates

Customer Investigations & Resolutions Manager
Customer and Market Operations



Part of Energy Queensland

Ergon Energy Network



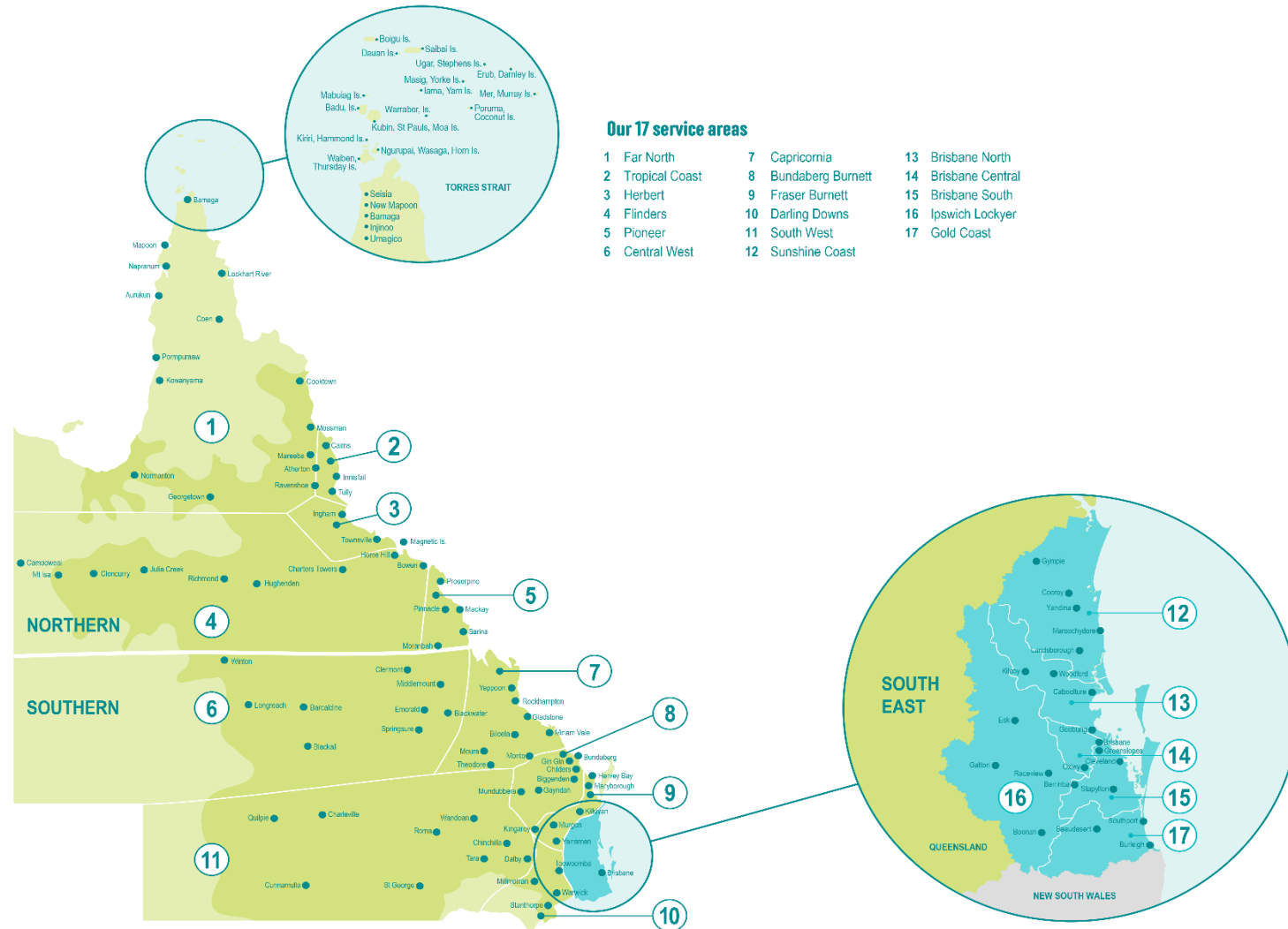
- Ergon Energy Network builds and maintains the electricity distribution network for regional Queensland
- Ergon Energy Network is 1 of the 2 distribution businesses in the Energy Queensland Group
- Ergon Energy Network builds and maintains the electricity distribution network for South East Queensland



Ergon Energy's Service Delivery Area



Part of Energy Queensland



Part of Energy Queensland

Our Community



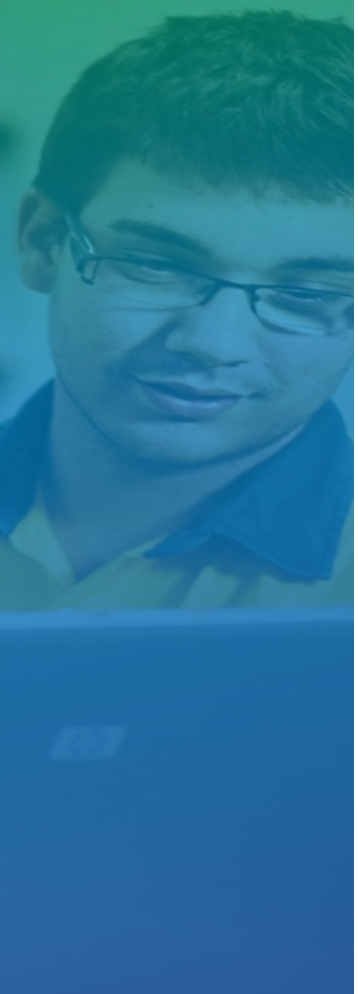
- Our vision is to ‘energise Queensland communities’, and we strive to support the communities that we live and work in; both with essential services and other community efforts
- As a network provider, the delivery of our capital works program is paramount to:
 - ✓ a safe reliable and affordable electricity
 - ✓ stimulating regional economic growth, such as supporting local contractors and businesses



Our Community

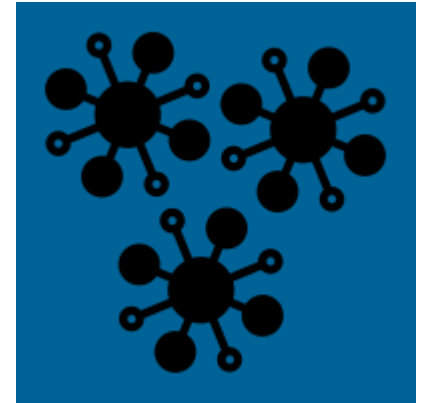


- As an essential service, providing energy safely, reliably, and sustainably is central to our corporate responsibility, which is highlighted by the role we play in disaster response
- As an essential service, we know that our disaster response capability and the resilience of the state's electricity network is critical to economic recovery



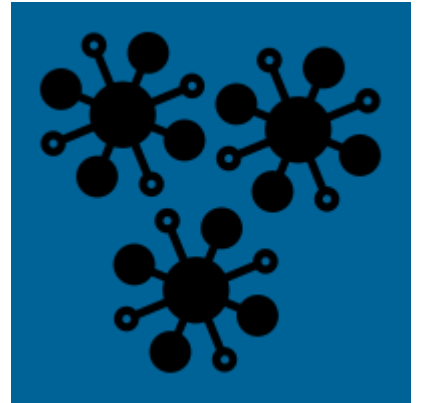
Our COVID-19 Safe Plan

- Energy Qld's Emergency Management Team developed a COVID-19 operating model with a view to :
 - ✓ slowing the spread of COVID-19
 - ✓ managing the health and safety of our employees
 - ✓ minimising the disruption of supply to our customers to ensure a secure and reliable electricity supply which is critical to the State's overall disaster response.



Our COVID-19 Safe Plan

- As a group of companies, we recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a significant impact on our customers and communities
- For our rural communities, the impact of COVID-19 comes on the top of the financial stress associated with years of drought, with two-thirds of the state still drought declared
- We are committed to using best endeavours to maintain a safe, secure and reliable electricity supply for the benefit of our customers and communities during the COVID 19 pandemic



Our Customers



- We've continued to provide a safe and reliable electricity supply to homes, businesses, and industry
- When completing a re-energisation visual, it is preferred that customers are not in the house at the same time or remain in a different room
- We have listened to customer feedback through our contact centre, social media and other channels, and have acted on that feedback to make changes to the way we operate during COVID-19



Balancing our program of work with the needs of our customers and communities at this time



- Ergon Energy's field crews have made some changes to the way they work and interact with each other, and with our customers and communities
- We always abide by social distancing measures to ensure minimal exposure to all parties
- Minimise the frequency and duration of planned outages for critical works, and provide as much notice as possible to assist households and businesses to manage during any outage



Revision of our works program

- We revised our works program with the restrictions to limit planned interruptions to those working and schooling from home
- Then, as the health threat lessened, we prioritised and accelerated the delivery of key capital projects to maximise employee utilisation and support local contractors and suppliers as part of the state's economic recovery



Small business customers



- Small businesses, together with other business customers, can through their Retailer seek short-term relief in the form of NMI re-classification or network tariff change due to the impacts of COVID-19 on their business operations (impact statement to be provided to their Retailer)

AER's Statement of Expectations

- EQ's distribution businesses believe that the AER's Statement of Expectations has been effective in ensuring that customers have remained connected to the electricity supply during the pandemic
- In particular, we have welcomed the detailed guidance and published responses to a range of industry questions that have assisted the business in adapting business processes during the pandemic
- Additionally, we are of the view that the Statement of Expectations has encouraged joint workings between the DNSPs and Retailers to better understand the impacts of COVID-19 on our customers and the identification of relevant responses

Contact

Contact details:

- Jennifer Gates 0448 942 023
- Jennifer.gates@energyq.com.au or
distributioncustomeradvocacy@energyq.com.au

Hardship Identifiers

Triggers

- loss of income
- decrease in income
- separation or divorce
- health issues
- affected by domestic and family violence
- change in circumstances
- impacted by COVID-19

Verbal Cues

- I recently lost my job
- My housekeeping money isn't covering everything
- I had to leave home quickly
- I'm now on my own
- I had an unexpected expenses to pay
e.g. car repairs, funeral costs
- I recently came out of the hospital
- I've had to support my family
- I can't afford my bill
- I have been impacted by COVID
- My partner has lost their job
- I have other bills to pay eg child care, mortgage, credit cards

Let's keep talking!

Thank you for joining us today.

Please complete our short survey to allow us to improve our future webinars and to deliver the information that is valuable to you.

Survey: bit.ly/EWOQsurvey2020 (case sensitive)

Any additional questions can be sent to marketing@ewoq.com.au

A recording of the Webinar: ***Supporting energy consumers financially affected by COVID-19 in Regional Queensland*** is available on our [website](#).

EWOQ team members are available to speak at community events. Email marketing@ewoq.com.au to find out more.



If you would like to receive Ergon's quarterly Customer Assist Bulletin, please email customerassist@ergon.com.au and let them know.