

Assisting customers in need

Power and Water voucher system

Customers who are experiencing financially difficult circumstances and are not able to pay their Power and Water domestic bill can seek assistance, advice and assessment by a community welfare agency.

Participating community agencies can provide vouchers that can only be used against Power and Water accounts.

Who can apply?

In addition to customers who apply to participating welfare agencies, in some circumstances, it may be appropriate for Power and Water to refer customers to these agencies for assistance through the Power and Water voucher program.

How are applications assessed?

Each financial year, Power and Water will distribute a limited number of vouchers to participating welfare agencies and financial counselling service providers to assist domestic consumers experiencing hardship. These agencies will determine eligibility and distribute the vouchers on behalf of Power and Water. Applicants residing outside of Australia are not eligible.

Customers applying for vouchers to assist in paying their domestic Power and Water bill due to financial crisis are assessed by a welfare agency. Assessment is similar to that for other forms of assistance such as emergency relief/cash, food, clothes and relief from other utility bills. In the majority of cases, it is expected that the applicant's circumstances will be because of:

- a lack of, or decrease in, income or significant, unavoidable expenses.
- family circumstances such as a death, desertion, accident or natural disaster such as flood or drought, resulting in unexpected expenses.

What is the maximum voucher amount?

The agency's normal case management procedures for assessing a customer's needs will be used to assess the amount of vouchers to be issued. However, the total value of the vouchers issued cannot be used to put the account in credit by more than the value of a single voucher. No change or refunds will be provided by Power and Water where an account is in credit by voucher payment.

It is expected that, wherever possible, the customer makes some financial contribution to the settlement of the account. The purpose of the voucher is to assist financially disadvantaged people in a crisis situation. It is not intended that the vouchers be used as ongoing income support. Preferably the customer should pay the balance of the Power and Water account in full after taking into consideration the vouchers issued against the account.

Power and Water respects the independence of the agency's assessment. Power and Water reserves the right to disallow vouchers at the discretion of the General Manager Retail. Vouchers may be disallowed by Power and Water where vouchers are provided:

- by more than one agency.
- for payment of charges other than consumption, connection and related charges for electricity and water.

Vouchers may not be accepted by Power and Water for payment of such charges as meter replacement, revenue protection, recovery fees, and/or sundry items which may or may not be related to illegal activity.

How can the vouchers be used?

Power and Water vouchers are not transferable. The voucher can only be used to help pay the customer's domestic Power and Water account and only the bill of the customer to whom they were issued. Power and Water vouchers must only be issued for Power and Water accounts for domestic (home) consumption and fixed daily charges for electricity, water and sewerage services.

What about disconnected services and debt collection?

Where disconnection has taken place, or is imminent, the agency should advise the customer to phone Power and Water on 1800 245 092 to determine if Power and Water vouchers can be applied in order to reconnect the service.

If the debt is unable to be resolved, other options such as Power and Water Credit Management of Hardship Customers (see point 3 Power and Water Hardship Guidelines) can be discussed with Power and Water.

When should the vouchers be issued?

As far as possible, agencies should manage the distribution of vouchers evenly throughout the year. Vouchers are only valid for issue during a financial year and must be redeemed at Power and Water within 14 days. Vouchers not issued during the valid period need to be returned to Power and Water intact after 30 June each year.

How to endorse the customer's original bill

The customer's original Power and Water bill must be endorsed as follows:

- Stamp with the agency stamp or write name of issuing agency.
- Total voucher amount issued to be written on bill.
- Date and sign vouchers (or otherwise endorse).

The above information will provide confirmation that the voucher(s) have been issued against a particular customer and will act as a check against clients representing the same account to another agency.

Agencies are advised that, where a client has received voucher assistance for the previous bill it will appear on the customer's next invoice.

How to remit vouchers

Vouchers must be presented to Power and Water accompanied by a Power and Water remittance notice either by:

- post:
Power and Water Corporation
GPO Box 3596
Darwin NT 0801
- or at any Power and Water customer service centre.

Power and Water vouchers must not be sent or presented to any other address including agents or debt collection companies.

Please remember

Only an original bill or notice issued by Power and Water including the remittance slip, will be accepted by the agency. The Power and Water bill or notice must be in personal name(s). If a copy of a Power and Water bill is required, please contact Power and Water on 1800 245 092.

Vouchers cannot be used against a commercial account.

Vouchers are redeemable only against the customer number and name indicated on the voucher.

No change or refunds will be given where vouchers exceed the amount due.

Vouchers cannot be used to put an account in credit by more than the value of a single voucher.

Vouchers can be deemed invalid if copied, altered or tampered with.

Agency checklist for completing a voucher and the butt

- The customer name.
- The Power and Water customer identification number.
- The customer's Power and Water bill or notice stamped, signed and dated.
- Tear off the remittance slip from the Power and Water bill and attach it to the vouchers (vouchers cannot be submitted without the remittance slip).
- Date of issue of voucher.
- Total number of vouchers issued.
- Name of agency.
- Agency contact number.
- Authoriser name.
- Authoriser signature.

The butt of the voucher needs to be completed and retained for return to Power and Water for audit purposes.

Additional information

We will continue to discuss with customers any difficulties they may be having in paying their bills and negotiate appropriate payment arrangements. To assist with paying your bills visit powerwater.com.au or call 1800 245 092 and ask about our different methods of payment:

- Direct payment (direct debit) from your financial institution
- BPay through your bank
- NT Government payroll deduction
- Centrepay deductions
- Voucher payment service
- Payment at a Post Office (please remember it takes two to three days to be received by Power and Water)
- Cash, EFTPOS or cheque
- Credit card (Master Card, BankCard or Visa) by telephoning 1800 644 849, available 24 hours a day or Online payment via Net Direct at powerwater.com.au
- Electronic funds transfer from your bank (by Power and Water guidelines with prior arrangement)