

ACT Civil & Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) — Energy & Water Hardship Assistance

Energy (Electricity & Gas) Water and Sewerage

Have you received a disconnection warning notice because your electricity or gas account is unpaid?

Has your electricity or gas been disconnected because your account is unpaid?

Have you been warned of possible restriction of supply or legal action because your water and sewerage account is unpaid?

Has your supply been restricted because your water and sewerage rates are unpaid?

What can you do?

First, either pay your account or try to make an arrangement with your utility to settle the account. Each utility has a dedicated hardship team that you should ask to speak to when you contact them.

If your utility will not make an arrangement with you and disconnection or restriction of supply would cause you or your household substantial hardship you can make an Application to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal for Hardship Assistance.

How do you make an Application?

By filling in our online application form, available on the ACAT website, or by contacting the ACAT registry — see contact details below.

What happens then?

An appointment will be made for you to meet in person at the Tribunal at a hearing. Hearings may also be heard by phone - you will be informed which of these two options will apply to your application.

The Tribunal may contact the utility concerned and issue an Interim Order to suspend any disconnection or restriction action (or restore the service if it has already been disconnected or restricted) until the matter is considered by the Tribunal at your hearing.

What happens at the hearing?

The hearing is very informal and should not take long. Two members of the Tribunal who specialise in energy and water matters will be present. They will discuss your account and decide on the most appropriate conditions to assist you in meeting your obligations.

You may have someone accompany you if you wish. If you can't attend the hearing, you can give written authority for someone to attend on your behalf. It is important that either you or someone representing you come to the hearing. Otherwise, the Tribunal may not be able to consider your application.

What happens after the hearing?

If the Tribunal agrees that disconnection would cause you or your household substantial hardship, the Tribunal has the power to order your utility to maintain supply of electricity, gas, or water to your premises.

Generally, the Tribunal will expect you to meet one or more of the following:

You pay your account by instalments of a set amount;

You pay all or part of your account by a specified date;

You enter into an arrangement to have deductions taken from your bank account or Centrelink benefit;

You meet with the Tribunal again when required to do so; or

Any other condition that the Tribunal considers appropriate in your case.

The Tribunal can also Order your utility to discharge part, or all, of your account, including any interest or fees incurred.

Are the conditions binding?

You will need to comply with the conditions to ensure the order to maintain supply remains in place. If your circumstances change, you can ask for a review of the conditions.

What if the conditions aren't kept?

The Tribunal may revoke the order preventing your utility from disconnecting or restricting supply. This may lead to disconnection of your electricity or gas or the restriction of your water supply by your utility. It also means the utility can resume debt collection.

What if your Hardship Application is not accepted?

The Tribunal will tell your utility that it is free to resume action to recover the debt. You should contact your utility to make arrangements to settle your debt.

Can you make another Hardship Application?

If you are under threat of disconnection or restriction again, and unable to make an arrangement with your utility, you may make another application to the Tribunal. However, the Tribunal will take into account whether you genuinely attempted to comply with any conditions set previously.

Is there any fee?

No. There are no fees or costs involved in making an application to the Tribunal for Hardship Assistance in relation to energy and water matters.

Do you need further assistance?

If you need more information, you can telephone the ACAT registry or visit the office in person.

ACAT LOCATION

Allara House, 15 Constitution Avenue, Canberra City ACT 2601

Contact Details:

Phone: 6207 1740

E-mail: acatenergyandwater@act.gov.au

Website: www.acat.act.gov.au