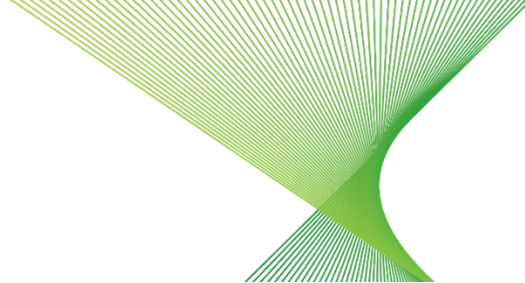


# Hardship Policy



Transgrid recognises that there are members of the community experiencing financial hardship. Transgrid is committed to assisting and supporting these members of the community to meet their obligation to comply with network safety requirements. This includes bushfire mitigation works, removal of unauthorised objects on easements and rectification of damage caused to Transgrid's network.

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## Who qualifies for hardship?

Transgrid understands that the financial obligations associated with meeting network requirements can be significant. Transgrid urges private land owners who are struggling to meet their financial obligations to contact us and seek assistance.

Private land owners in any of the following circumstances may be eligible for assistance:

- reliant on government assistance or Centrelink payments;
- unemployed;
- medical illness/injury, mental health or addictive behavioural issues of the customer/individual or a dependant, affecting their capacity to pay;
- family violence;
- physical or intellectual disability of the customer/individual or dependant affecting their capacity to pay;
- death in the family affecting capacity to pay;
- change in the family unit affecting capacity to pay;
- sudden loss of income or substantial reduction in income, long term fixed low income; or
- natural calamity such as fire, flood, drought or storm damage.

Transgrid will also consider support if the cost of works is significant compared to the private land owner's capacity to pay.

Transgrid seeks to address matters of hardship early. Transgrid encourages landholders who believe they are eligible for assistance to contact Transgrid as to their circumstances and the hardship that the recovery of costs by Transgrid would impose. Transgrid will respond to private land owners early and in a non-judgemental manner.

## Hardship support

In consideration of submissions for hardship support, Transgrid may, at its discretion either:

- make a reduction in the quantum of such costs; or
- provide a flexible payment plan for the payment of such costs.

In developing hardship support agreements with individuals Transgrid recognises the rights and needs detailed below.

It is a private land owner's right:

- to be treated in a respectful and professional manner;
- that their confidentiality be maintained at all times;
- to have options, information and support clearly explained; and
- to be protected from debt recovery or legal action while meeting arrangements agreed with Transgrid.

Transgrid does need private land owners to:

- provide us information as to their circumstances and their capacity to pay by answering a few questions;
- acknowledge the debt and repay their outstanding amount;
- advise us if their contact details or financial circumstances materially change; and
- notify us if they are unable to meet agreed payments or terms.

## **Government concession programs and financial counselling services**

Transgrid can refer private land owners to further help through welfare organisations, financial counselling services and appropriate government departments so that the individual can access government concessions.

Key contacts for customers facing hardship include the National Financial Counselling Hotline on 1800 007 007 and ASIC's MoneySmart website <http://www.moneysmart.gov.au>

## **Complaints Resolution**

If a private land owner is not satisfied with the assessment of financial hardship they may request a review or make a complaint in accordance with Transgrid's complaint and dispute resolution procedure available on Transgrid's website. Complaint escalations can be made through Energy and Water Ombudsman of New South Wales (EWON) or the Energy & Water Ombudsman of Victoria (EWOV) if satisfactory resolution able to be is not achieved.

## **Implementation**

The Hardship Policy is to be available to external stakeholders via the Transgrid website. Transgrid will provide a copy of this Hardship Policy to private land owners from whom costs are being recovered.