



15 August 2025

The Hon. Penny Sharpe, MLC
Minister for Climate Change, Energy, the Environment, and for Heritage
52 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Minister Sharpe,

Ensuring NSW energy rebates effectively support affordability

Our organisations are concerned about recent decisions to reduce energy rebate amounts and reduce the Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) cap supporting energy affordability for NSW households. These changes come at a time of continuing, severe cost of living pressures and rising energy bills. Affordable access to energy for NSW households - particularly low income and disadvantaged households – is being seriously threatened. While we understand the NSW Government budget must respond to a range of priorities, effective support for household energy affordability is particularly critical at this time.

Analysis of data from the Social Programs for Energy Code (SPEC)¹ reveals a progressive decline in the proportion of average bill support offered by rebates (particularly the low-income household energy rebate) was evident even before the recent changes.

The decision to reduce rebates and EAPA caps also comes after significant recent increases in the Default Market Offer (DMO), signalling wider rises in energy bills. DMO determinations have also demonstrated that costs associated with the energy system transition – including implementing the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap – are likely to drive significant further increases in NSW energy costs over the short to medium term, before expected

¹ <https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/nsw-plans-and-progress/regulation-and-policy/nsw-social-programs-energy-code/energy-social-programs>

benefits are realised. In combination, these factors will see vulnerable NSW households receiving less assistance when they need it more than ever.

We understand the fiscal constraints facing the NSW Government and the need to balance competing priorities under challenging circumstances. We also understand the need to ensure supports for energy affordability are integrated effectively into the wider NSW energy, housing and social policy framework. However, effective support for energy affordability is a critical investment in economic equity, social wellbeing and the resilience of the NSW community, particularly at this time of significant energy system transition.

Now is an opportunity to review NSW Government energy supports, including rebates and EAPA, and consider how they can support better outcomes for NSW households, particularly during this transition period. As the NSW Consumer Energy Strategy is implemented, there is scope to improve rebates and energy supports and ensure they are better integrated with other NSW Government energy programs, and to ensure they both deliver better outcomes and use budget resources most efficiently.

Implementing proportional energy rebate support alongside integrated measures to support electrification, improved energy efficiency and shared benefit from consumer energy resources offers an opportunity to address the critical affordability challenges faced by NSW households now, while improving the long-term effectiveness of NSW energy assistance to those who need it most. During the energy system transition this is particularly critical for people experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability due to factors or circumstances they cannot control.

Our organisations would welcome the opportunity to discuss recent changes, our recommendations and opportunities for reform with you and your office. We are keen to work collaboratively with your office and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water to ensure that energy policy and supports in NSW remain fair, inclusive, and responsive to community needs.

Please contact Douglas McCloskey at dmccloskey@jec.org.au to arrange any follow up discussions.

Yours sincerely

Douglas McCloskey
On behalf of

The Justice and Equity Centre

Financial Rights Legal Centre

Mob Strong Debt Help

NSW Council of Social Service

St Vincent de Paul Society of NSW

Sydney Community Forum