



Family & Domestic Violence Policy



Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Supporting customers affected by family violence	3
3. Record Keeping	5
4. Contact us	5

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

Energy Locals Pty Ltd, trading as Meriton Energy Services (ABN 23 606 408 879) (Energy Locals) recognises the important role that energy providers can have in supporting customers affected by family or domestic violence (Affected Customer) to regain safety and stability and we are committed to ensuring that we deliver effective and sensitive responses to customers experiencing hardship and vulnerabilities, such as family or domestic violence.

The purpose of this policy is to set out how Energy Locals will endeavour to provide Affected Customers with access to safe, supportive, and flexible assistance.

1.2. Application & review

This policy applies to Energy Locals Pty Ltd (ACN 606 408 879) and our directors, employees, partners, agents and contractors (Energy Locals) and is for all customers who are experiencing or have experienced family violence. This policy will be reviewed periodically and at least every two years and was last updated in July 2022.

1.3. What is Family Violence?

Family violence can be defined as behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person, where that behaviour is physically or sexually, emotionally, psychologically, or economically abusive; threatening, coercive; or in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety of that family member or another person. Family violence can also include behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, the behaviour referred to above.

Examples of family violence include carrying out the actions below, or threatening to do so:

- Assault or causing personal injury.
- Sexual assault or engaging in another form of sexually coercive behaviour.
- Property damage.
- Verbal abuse, threatening behaviours, and emotional manipulation.
- Preventing victim-survivors from participating in their religion, cultural practices, or language of preference.
- Isolating a victim-survivor from their family, friends, and support networks.
- Denying reasonable financial autonomy or financial support.
- Stalking, harassment, intimidation, or coercion to cause fear or ongoing harassment, including by a third party, electronic communication, or social media.
- Unlawfully depriving a family member of their liberty.
- Killing or injuring an animal.

2. Supporting customers affected by family violence

2.1. Employee training and awareness

Energy Locals provides training to all of our employees and contractors (Agents) who, acting on our behalf, may engage with Affected Customers or be responsible for systems and processes that guide these interactions (including management of Agents). This training addresses the four categories set out below.

(a) The nature and consequences of family or domestic violence

Energy Locals ensures that our Agents understand that there are many forms of family or domestic violence and that all of them are to be taken seriously.

(b) The application of this policy

Our Agents are trained to ensure that they are clear about their role and responsibilities, including this policy and any other processes within their context for responding to Affected Customers.

(c) How to identify customers affected by family or domestic violence

Our Agents understand that Affected Customers may feel ashamed or afraid to disclose their experiences and that care must be given to identify these customers as those experiencing family violence can present differently as a result of the different risks, impacts, and barriers to accessing support and safety that those customers experience.

(d) How to engage appropriately and effectively with Affected Customers

Our Agents are trained to:

- believe customers when they disclose that they are experiencing family or domestic violence, not require undue burden of evidence and give the customer choice and control over their options wherever possible;
- remove the need for customers to repeat their story unnecessarily;
- demonstrate empathy through active listening, asking open questions and using a calm and patient tone;
- proactively provide clear, accessible, and inclusive information; and
- provide meaningful opportunities for customers experiencing family or domestic violence to give feedback about the responses offered.

2.2. Account Security

Energy Locals respects our customers' safety and privacy. Unless instructed otherwise, we will not disclose an Affected Customer's information to anyone else, even if their name is on the account. We take our customer's privacy and protecting their personal information seriously. We manage this information in line with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and the Australian Privacy Principles. Customers can view a copy of our Privacy Policy here or on our website.

Energy Locals will:

- take reasonable steps to elicit the Affected Customer's preferred method of communication;
- offer alternative methods of communication if the Affected Customer's preferred method of communication is not practicable; and
- keep a record of arrangements reached in accordance with the above.

2.3. Debt Management & Payment Assistance

Energy Locals recognises that family or domestic violence is a potential cause of payment difficulty.

Before taking any action to recover money owing from an Affected Customer, Energy Locals will consider:

- the potential impact of debt recovery on the Affected Customer; and
- whether other persons are jointly or individually responsible for the energy usage that resulted in the accumulation of the Affected Customer's debt.

If an Affected Customer is having trouble paying their bills as a result of family or domestic violence, Energy Locals can provide a number of payment options (if applicable), including payment plans and payment extensions or deferrals. We can also provide assistance under our Hardship Policy, available here or on our website.

2.4. External Support

(a) Services directly related to family or domestic violence

There are a number of organisations that specialise in supporting and working with those experiencing family violence – whether immediate or longer-term support is required:

Agency	Contact Details
Police	000
Emergency Response	000
1800RESPECT (national)	1800 737 732 or www.1800respect.org.au
Men's Referral Service	1300 766 491 or www.ntv.org.au
Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre (Victoria)	1800 015 188 or www.safesteps.org.au

(b) Interpreter services and contact assistance

For language assistance please contact our interpreter service on 131 450:

- Italian: Servizio Interpreti
- Spanish: Servicio de interprete
- Vietnamese: dịch vụ phiên dịch
- Arabic: خدمة الترجمة العربية
- Greek: υπηρεσία διερμηνείας
- Hindi: दुभाषिया सेवा
- Chinese: 口譯服務

National Relay Service: customers who are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, can contact us through the National Relay Service (TTY) on 133 677, by giving them Energy Locals number 1300 896 811 to call. For more information, visit www.relayservice.gov.au.

3. Record Keeping

Energy Locals will maintain records that are sufficient to evidence its compliance with this Policy and relevant legislation. These records will be retained:

- for at least 2 years;
- for as long as the Affected Customer continues to receive assistance in accordance with Part 7 of the Victorian Energy Retail Code of Practice; or
- where an Affected Customer has, within the periods set out above, made a complaint or referred a dispute to the Energy Ombudsman in relation to the provision of family violence assistance by Energy Locals, for the period the complaint or dispute remains unresolved.

4. Contact us

If you have a question regarding this policy or any other matter, please contact us:

Email: hello@meritonenergy.com.au

Telephone: 1300 896 811

Chat: via our website

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