

Has your electricity, gas or water supply, or your telephone or internet service been affected by the floods or cyclones?

This factsheet is designed to help Queenslanders with some of the issues you may be facing when your property has been damaged by a natural disaster such as a cyclone, storm or flood.

Gas, electricity and water

What if I am having trouble with my connection and supply?

If you are having trouble with your connection and supply, contact your retailer. Your retailer is the company that looks after connections, billing and customer service.

If you have moved because of the floods or cyclones, you need to contact your retailer to be connected at the new property. The connection should be made on a date you agree to or within 10 business days. If you are changing retailers, your new connection must be made within one to two business days.

What if I am having trouble paying bills?

If you are having trouble paying your bills because of the floods or cyclones (eg you lost your job or are finding it hard to get by), tell your retailer. Your retailer should be able to help you set up a payment plan and you might be able to get help under a 'hardship policy'. You cannot be disconnected from services in this situation.

The law says each retailer must have a hardship policy that can:

- agree to fair and reasonable payment arrangements (eg instalment plans)
- stop disconnection or any debt collection activity
- tell you about concessions and government assistance (eg grants), and how to get these.

For more information on how to avoid disconnection when you are having trouble paying your bills, contact the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland on 1800 662 837 or visit www.ewoq.com.au

You should also consider seeing a free financial counsellor, who can help you work out a budget to manage your bill payments. To find a financial counsellor, visit www.financialcounsellingaustralia.org.au or contact Financial First Aid on 1800 007 007.

Who pays for damage due to a power failure?

If you have experienced damage due to a power surge or from power failure (eg damage to appliances or food), you should lodge a claim with your electricity retailer.

What if my utilities problem has not been sorted out?

If you have tried to sort out a problem with your gas, electricity or water provider and it has not been resolved, contact the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland on 1800 662 837 within 12 months of when the problem first happened. This is an independent, free service that can legally force the supplier to deal with your complaint.

The ombudsman contacts the provider and will ask them to try again to resolve your problem. If you have tried to sort out the problem with your provider more than once, the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland can investigate your matter. This means they will look at your situation, consider the law and try to help you reach an agreement with your utility provider.

Telephone and internet

What if I am having trouble with my connection and service?

If you are having trouble with your connection and service, contact your telephone service provider about your damaged telephone line. However, if you have more than one telephone socket in your home, you will need to contact a registered cabler to fix any other telephone sockets. The telephone service provider is only responsible for repairing the first socket.

What if I am having trouble paying my bills?

If you are having trouble paying your bills, contact your provider and tell them you live in a flood or cyclone affected area and are having problems paying your bill. They may have special arrangements in place to help flood or cyclone affected people.

See if your provider can place a hold on your bill while you work out a way to pay off your debt. You may also want to see if you can pay your bill after it is due and/or pay your bill in smaller amounts (instalments). The provider can ask for evidence of your financial hardship if you want to pay your bill over a longer period.

If you do not contact your provider, your service may be disconnected or your credit record may be affected. However, your provider must not take debt collection action against you while you are discussing a payment arrangement or paying your bill in instalments.

If you disagree about a bill amount, ask the provider to investigate your bill and try to sort it out with them.

You should also consider seeing a free financial counsellor, who can help you work out a budget to manage your bill payments. To find a financial counsellor, visit www.fcqn.asn.au or contact Financial First Aid on 1800 007 007.

What if my telephone or internet problem has not been sorted out?

If you have tried to sort out a problem with your telephone or internet service provider and it has not been resolved, contact the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman on 1800 062 058 within 12 months of when the problem first happened.

This is an independent, free service to help sort out disagreements between customers and utility providers.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman will contact your provider and ask them to try and resolve the problem. Your provider has 10 days to do this. If the problem is not resolved within 10 days, you need to contact the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman again.

The ombudsman may then investigate the situation, work out the issues and try to help you reach an agreement with your provider. The law says telephone and internet providers must obey the decisions made by the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman.

For more information about the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman and the laws that apply, visit www.tio.com.au

Other financial help

Can I get a discount on my utilities bill?

If you have a government concession card, you can get a discount on your utilities bill. To receive a discount, contact your utilities provider and give them your concession card details.

Do you need extra help accessing our services?



We can organise for an accredited interpreter to help you. We are committed to making our services accessible to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with disabilities.

If you would like this factsheet explained in your language, please phone the Translating and Interpreting Service on 13 14 50 to speak to an interpreter. Ask them to connect you to Legal Aid Queensland. If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment you can contact us using the National Relay Service. Visit www.relayservice.gov.au and ask for 1300 65 11 88 (our legal information line). These are free services.

Your Local Legal Aid Queensland office:

BRISBANE

44 Herschel St, 4000

BUNDABERG

3rd Floor, WIN Tower,
Cnr Quay & Barolin Sts, 4670

CABOOLTURE

Ground Floor, Kingsgate
42 King St, 4510

CAIRNS

Level 2, Cairns Square Complex,
42-52 Abbott St, 4870

INALA

Level 1, Inala Commonwealth
Offices, 20 Wirraway Pde, 4077

IPSWICH

Level 7, 117 Brisbane St, 4305

MACKAY

Ground Floor,
17 Brisbane St, 4740

MAROOCHYDORE

Ground Floor, M1 Building
1 Duporth Ave, 4558

MOUNT ISA

6 Miles St, 4825

ROCKHAMPTON

Ground Floor, 35 Fitzroy St, 4700

SOUTHPORT

Level 2, 7 Bay St, 4215

TOOWOOMBA

1st Floor, 154 Hume St, 4350

TOWNSVILLE

3rd Floor, Northtown
280 Flinders St, 4810

WOODRIDGE

1st Floor, Woodridge Place,
Cnr Ewing Rd & Carmody St, 4114

For more information
about our services visit
legalaid.qld.gov.au

or phone 1300 65 11 88
or 1300 650 143 (Indigenous Hotline)

