

altogether.

Family Violence Policy



Table of Contents

Family Violence Policy1
Our policy 3
What is family violence..... 3
We are here to help you 3
Account security 4
Need assistance paying your bills 5
Experiencing financial hardship..... 5
Additional support services..... 5
Feedback and complaints 6
Meeting our obligations..... 6
Our responsibilities..... 6
Contact us.....7

Our policy

The purpose of Altogether's Family Violence Policy is to outline how existing and former customers affected by family violence can get safe, flexible, and supportive assistance to ensure their energy, thermal and water remains connected, and that their personal and financial security are managed effectively.

Altogether are committed to dealing empathetically, respectfully, and fairly with employees and customers affected by family violence. This Policy applies to all Altogether customers.

Your safety is important to us: If there is an immediate threat to your safety, call 000. For additional support, you can contact: 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)

What is family violence

Family violence takes many forms. Examples can include, but are not limited to:

- Physical violence
- Sexual assault or sexually abusive behaviour
- Verbal abuse
- Stalking
- Financial abuse
- Spiritual or cultural abuse or threatened abuse of pets
- Damage to property or belongings
- Technology assisted abuse, such as smart phones and social media
- Serious neglect where there is a relationship of dependance
- Behaviours of a person using violence that causes a child to be exposed to the effects of family domestic violence

We are here to help you

Altogether employees are trained to provide you with support while you are experiencing or have experienced family violence.

In dealing with you, we will prioritise your safety, consider your circumstances and avoid having to repeatedly disclose information or instances of family violence.

Some matters the team are trained in are as follows:

- Ensure our employees are aware of our family violence policy and its application.

- Understanding the nature and consequences of family violence, including financial impact that may require payment assistance options.
- How to identify signs of family violence and how to assist customers affected by family violence.
- How to minimize the need for a customer affected by family violence to have to not repeatedly disclose information or refer to their experience of family violence.
- Ensure customers are provided with the option to speak with the same agent to minimise the need to repeat information.
- How to work with agents or representatives on behalf of the customer.

Account security

Keeping your information safe is important to us. You have rights to privacy, and we have a privacy policy that sets out what we do to ensure this. The Altogether Privacy Policy can be found [here](#).

We also know that sometimes it may not be safe to send information to your home address. So, we've developed ways to make sure you receive the information you need, while keeping your information secure. If you wish to turn off postal bills and communication, please [contact us](#).

We invite you to communicate with us about your situation so that we can best assist you. You can find our contact information at the bottom of this policy and on our website.

You may want to nominate someone to contact us on your behalf. This may include:

- someone you would like to appoint as your authorised representative (like a social worker, legal aid representative, family member or friend);
- an advocate (like an interpreter, family member or friend who assists with communication); or
- a financial counsellor or someone who helps you manage your bills.

Let us know who your support person or authorised representative is when we speak with you and provide consent for them to act on your behalf. With your consent, we'll engage with them as we would with you, consistent with your consent and instructions and in line with our privacy obligations.

We will check with you, on how you wish to proceed, including the following:

- removing other authorised representatives on your account;
- putting additional account security measures on your account, including assigning a code word to your account to prevent unauthorised access by other persons;
- setting up a new account in your own name;
- determining what notes to include in your file;
- confirming with you, your preferred method of communication so that we send information and communicate with you in a safe way;

- confirm the best way to contact you ongoing and the most suitable times
- assisting you with payment difficulties, in line with our Financial Hardship Policy; and
- helping you connect with support services that may be better placed to respond to your circumstances.

Need assistance paying your bills

We are here to help you if you need assistance paying your utility bill because of short-term financial difficulties or longer-term financial hardship. Our team will work with you to help tailor a plan that suits your individual needs and your financial situation. It is essential that you let us know as soon as possible if you are facing financial issues and are struggling to pay your bills. Please [contact us](#) as soon as possible.

Experiencing financial hardship

We understand that there are times when you need support, which is why Altogether has a customer hardship program that is designed to help support you to get you back on track to pay your bills. Our customer Hardship Program is available to our eligible residential customers experiencing financial hardship, whether temporary or long-term, that makes paying their bill difficult.

To access our Customer Hardship Policy, please click [here](#).

Additional support services

	Organisation	What they do	Contact details
Government	Police/Emergency Response	Law enforcement services – call if you or your child/family is in immediate danger	000
	Services Australia	Centrelink, Medicare, Child Support services – social workers can provide short term counselling, support, and information, and refer you to other support services	Social Work Services, Phone: 13 28 50 Multilingual, Phone: 13 12 02 www.servicesaustralia.gov.au
Financial	National Debt Helpline	Free financial counselling services – get help in managing bills and debts	Phone: 1800 007 007 www.ndh.org.au
Wellbeing	Lifeline	Crisis support services	13 11 14
	National Respect Line	National counselling and support service for people impacted by family & domestic violence, sexual assault, and abuse.	1800 737 732 www.1800respect.org.au
	Family Relationship Advice Line	Information and advice on family relationship issues and parenting arrangements after separation	Phone: 1800 050 321 Open weekdays 8am–8pm, and 10am–4pm on Saturdays

Feedback and complaints

If you have a complaint regarding our Family Violence Policy, you can draw our direct attention to this by contacting us on 1300 806 806. We will send confirmation once we have received your complaint within 1 business day. Your complaint will be handled with sensitivity, priority and in accordance with our Complaints and Dispute Resolution Policy [located here](#). We are committed to treating complaints and disputes confidentially, promptly, equitably, and professionally at no cost to you.

If you are not satisfied with our response, you can contact the relevant Ombudsman scheme in the state in which your services are provided. The Ombudsman provides an independent way to resolve complaints and can make decisions based on what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances of each case. Not all states provide Ombudsman schemes to customers of embedded networks, and they may refer you to an alternative service. These services are free to customers.

- Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) 1800 246 545
- Energy & Water Ombudsman QLD (EWOQ) 1800 662 837

Meeting our obligations

Altogether have a Family Violence Policy to ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of our customers. The policy and processes will be reviewed on an ongoing basis as part of Altogether's internal compliance program to ensure that Altogether meets its obligations with respect to:

- the Retail Law
- the Retail Rules
- the AER Family Violence Guideline
- the Altogether Customer Hardship Policy.

Our responsibilities

This Family Violence Policy is effective from 1 May 2023 and will be reviewed and updated from time to time as required to reflect changes in circumstances or maintain consistency with leading practice.

This review does not preclude us from reviewing the policy at more regular intervals, should this be necessary. Following a review, an updated policy will be placed on our Altogether website www.altogethergroup.com.au.

This policy addresses the requirements of the National Energy Retail Amendment (Protecting customers affected by family violence). The Energy Retail Code, which sets out retailers' obligations and minimum customer entitlements, takes precedence over this policy in all circumstances.

This Family Violence Policy is publicly available on our website www.altogethergroup.com.au and will be emailed and/or posted to you upon your request, at no charge.

Contact us

We understand that experiencing these challenges is difficult and that every customer's experience is personal and sensitive. To ensure we can provide the support you need, we encourage all customers to contact us.

Phone: 1300 803 803

Website: <https://altogethergroup.com.au/contact-us/>

The hours of operation are Monday to Friday 8:30 – 5:00pm (excluding national holidays). Faults and Emergencies are available 24 hours per day.