

Queensland Government Utility Relief Payments 2020

Q&As for retailers and embedded network operators

Information for households and small businesses

Q. What is the Queensland Government's utility relief package?

The Queensland Government's \$4 billion package to support Queensland workers, households and businesses includes a \$300 million household relief package, which builds on the \$100 million Asset Ownership Dividend announced in mid-March 2020.

In 2020, these measures will provide Queensland households with a total of \$200 off their utility bills (paid on electricity bills). Households will subsequently benefit from a further two Asset Ownership Dividend payments of \$50 each in 2021 and 2022.

The Government is also providing a \$100 million power bill relief package for small to medium businesses, including sole traders, with a \$500 utility rebate that will be delivered as an automatic credit on customers' electricity bills.

Q. What makes up the household relief package?

The \$200 household rebate builds on the Queensland Government's commitment to provide a \$50 Asset Ownership Dividend to households and will see households receive an additional \$150 towards their household utility costs (water and electricity) – which customers will automatically receive via their electricity bill. This is the quickest way for government to provide urgent assistance to Queensland households impacted by COVID 19.

Q. Where can I get more information on the utility rebates?

Please visit the Queensland Government website:

For households: <https://www.covid19.qld.gov.au/government-actions/financial-support-for-individuals>

For small businesses: <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/>

Q. What is the Asset Ownership Dividend?

The Queensland Government previously announced a \$50 Asset Ownership Dividend for Queensland households for the next three years (in 2020, 2021 and 2022). Because Queensland's power assets are publicly owned, Queenslanders are able to share in the dividends.

Around \$200 million from the dividends of government-owned corporations has already been used to provide households with an automatic \$50 bill credit in 2018 and 2019.

The \$300 million household relief package provides an extra \$150 for households on top of this, for a total of \$200 in utility relief in 2020.

Q: Who is eligible to receive the household rebate?

The \$200 rebate is being provided to households who receive a stand-alone bill for their electricity use. To be eligible, households must have an account that is active on

30 April 2020.

This includes households in privately-owned embedded networks (e.g. apartments, caravan parks, manufactured home parks, retirement villages) who pay their electricity to their embedded network operator such as the residential complex owner, manager or utility billing company. These customers will have the rebate credited to their bills by their embedded network operator or utility billing company.

Households with card-operated meters are also eligible for the rebate, which will be automatically transferred to their orange power cards (linked card).

Households who do not receive a separate electricity bill (e.g. where electricity is included as part of the rent, or an active account is not in place) are not eligible to receive the \$200 rebate.

If customers have not received the rebate by the end of July 2020, they should contact their retailer or electricity provider.

Q. What businesses will receive the rebate?

All businesses (small, medium and sole traders) who consume less than 100 MWh per annum, as defined by the National Energy Retail Law, will receive the rebate. This will be automatically applied on business customers' electricity bills. To be eligible, the business must have an account that is active on 30 April 2020.

Please note: The department is in the process of finalising the requirements for small to medium businesses that have multiple (consolidated) accounts or aggregate their load at the retailer contract level. Once finalised, further advice will be provided to retailers and embedded network stakeholders on the application of the \$500 rebate to multi-site customers.

Q. Why are the rebates only being paid on accounts active on 30 April 2020?

To facilitate delivery of the household and small business rebates through electricity bills, the Queensland Government has asked:

- electricity retailers, utility billing companies, and
- landlords, property managers, caravan park owners or body corporates who on-supply electricity to households and small business tenants,

to provide the rebate to all their customers that have an active electricity account on **30 April 2020**.

Applying the rebate on 30 April ensures a consistent approach for all Queensland households and small businesses, and reduces the chance of 'lost' or 'duplicate' payments, for example as a result of account transfer between retailers, or customers moving address.

Q. I opened my account *after* 30 April 2020. What do I do?

All residential and small business customers with an active electricity account will automatically be provided with the \$200 household and/or \$500 small business rebate.

If customers had an open account on 30 April 2020, and have not received their rebate by the end of July 2020 – they should contact their retailer. Retailers may ask to see a copy of the customers' bill for the required period to show that they have not previously received the credit from them or another retailer.

If the customer opens a new account after 30 April 2020, the rebate will not apply to this account.

*Retailers please note – this information should not be advertised generally, and retailers should contact Smart Service Queensland to confirm payment to customers in these situations. They will be approved on a case by case basis.

Q. When will Queenslanders start to receive the utility rebate?

Depending upon when their bill falls due, customers will see the payment on their bill in from 1 May onwards.

For households, the entire \$200 rebate (providing relief for both electricity and water costs) will appear as a credit on the next electricity bill they receive after 30 April 2020.

For small businesses, the entire \$500 rebate will appear as a credit on the next electricity bill they receive after 30 April 2020.

If a customer hasn't received their rebate by the end of July 2020, they should contact their electricity provider (i. their electricity retailer, or embedded network operator)

Q. Why isn't the household utility rebate being applied to my water bill?

To ensure the \$200 rebate is paid to Queensland households as quickly as possible, the Queensland Government has decided that the simplest and most efficient process is to apply the utility rebate as a whole, to electricity bills. Electricity retailers already have established systems for providing government concessions and rebates through customers' bills.

Q. How do I know I received the rebate?

Your electricity bill will show a \$200 or \$500 (cr) credit payment, with the wording "Qld Govt Relief Payment", or similar.

If customers do not receive this payment on their bill by the end of July 2020, they should contact their electricity retailer or billing entity.

Q: Will the utility rebate affect any other rebates/concessions?

No. The utility rebate does not affect a household's eligibility for any other Queensland Government concessions, including energy and property concessions, such as the South East Queensland Pensioner Water Subsidy.

Further detail on the existing concessions is available at <https://www.qld.gov.au/community/cost-of-living-support/concessions>.

Q. My account is currently in credit. Do I still get a utility rebate?

Yes. The utility rebate will still be applied to your electricity bill for you to use when you are no longer in credit.

Q. Will the utility rebate affect my solar feed-in tariff?

No. Neither the Queensland Government solar feed-in tariff, nor any other retailer feed-in tariff will be affected. The utility rebate will be credited to your electricity bill in addition to any solar credit you receive. Normal retailer business processes apply to customers in credit.

Q. My next bill is due soon, do I need to pay this in full?

Yes. The utility rebate will be applied automatically regardless of the balance of a customer's bill. If a customer is having difficulty paying their bill, they are encouraged to contact their retailer to discuss what additional support or payment options are available.

Q. I am currently overdue on my most recent electricity bill. Am I still eligible to receive the rebate?

Yes. All residential and small business customers with an active electricity account will automatically be provided with the \$200 household and/or \$500 small business rebate, regardless of the current status of their electricity bill.

Q. I am currently on a payment plan. Will I still receive the rebate?

Yes. All residential and small business customers on a payment plan or participating in a hardship program will be eligible to receive the \$200 household and/or \$500 small business rebate.

Q. I live in a community that uses Card Operated Meters for my power. How will I get the rebate?

Customers using card operated meters do not need to do anything. Ergon Energy will load the \$200 household utility rebate onto your Orange recharge card automatically. Check with the store where you buy your power credits in the coming months to see if the \$200 utility rebate is available to use.

Q. I have a granny flat that shares a single connection – will I get two rebates?

One \$200 household rebate will be applied per active electricity account. If two residential premises on one site share a single account/electricity connection, then the \$200 rebate would only apply to a single electricity account.

Q. Electricity is included in my rent so I don't get a separate electricity bill. Do I still get the utility rebate?

No. To receive the utility rebate, customers must be separately billed for their electricity supply/consumption.

Q. What if I am a landlord that pays my tenant's water bill (access, usage charges or both), but they have their own electricity account?

Regardless of the arrangements for customers' individual water supply, the government understands that nearly all Queensland households are being impacted by COVID-19 and all need additional support.

[Information for embedded network customers](#)

Q. I receive my electricity bill from a body corporate, site manager or a utility billing company. Will I still get the rebate?

Not all households or small businesses have an account with an electricity retailer. Sometimes, your landlord, property manager, park owner, body corporate or an entity contracted by these parties buys electricity in bulk and on-sells this to you based on how much you consume.

Residents in these types of arrangements are eligible for the \$200 rebate, and small businesses are eligible for the \$500 rebate. Your complex owner, manager or utility billing company should receive your utility rebate on their bill from May 2020 onward, and they will pass it onto your household as part of your next electricity bill. If you haven't received

this assistance by 31 July 2020, please contact your utility provider (body corporate, caravan park owner, utility billing company, etc.).

Q. I own/operate an embedded electricity network. What do I need to do?

The Government is asking that all embedded network owners self-identify with their electricity retailer by **25 April 2020** and make the necessary billing system adjustments to ensure that their embedded network customers are provided with the relevant utility rebate.

To do this, you will need to notify your retailer by 25 April 2020 to advise the number of occupied households or small business tenants (as at 30 April 2020), within your premises. The relevant forms for this purpose (**Form 511** for households and **Form 514** for small businesses) have been provided to electricity retailers and embedded network industry groups. They can also be downloaded from the Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors website:

<https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/community/queensland-government-concessions/information-retailers-service-providers>

Your retailer will provide a bulk credit to you (i.e. \$200 x number of occupied households or \$500 x number of small business tenants) on your next bill.

You must then pass on these rebates onto your residents and/or small business tenants on their next bill. We understand that some embedded network owners engage a third party meter reading and billing service. Some of these billing agents have also been informed of this Queensland Government initiative and you may wish to contact your provider to ensure the necessary system adjustments have been put in place.

Please Note: Failure to pass on the \$200 household rebate to residents is a breach of condition 13 of an Embedded Network Operator's (exempt seller's) retail exemption conditions with the Australian Energy Regulator. If an exempt seller fails to comply with a retail exemption condition, a penalty may be applied by the AER (under s112 of the National Energy Retail Law).

Additional Information for Retailers/Embedded Network Operators

Q. How will retailers receive payment for providing the rebate to customers?

Retailers will be reimbursed by the government when they submit the required tax invoice to the Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors (DCDSS). The tax invoice should cover the total amount reimbursed and match the total number of claimants the retailer has.

This is the same process that has been used in previous years by retailers and embedded network operators to process the Queensland Government's \$50 Asset Ownership Dividend payments and electricity concession arrangements for households.

The department understands that for some retailers, payment of the rebate to a large number of customers at once needs to be managed closely. DCDSS has advised that reimbursements will be undertaken very quickly after receiving complete claims from retailers.

The required forms can be downloaded from the Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors web site:

<https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/community/queensland-government-concessions/information-retailers-service-providers>

Q. How will embedded network operators receive payment for providing the rebate to residents and small business tenants?

Embedded network operators are asked to notify their retailer **by 25 April 2020** of the number of eligible residences or small business tenants they expect to have in their embedded network as at 30 April 2020, using the relevant form - **Form 511** (for residential) and **Form 514** (for small business). Early lodgement will assist retailers to credit accounts in a timely manner.

Embedded network operators will receive a bulk payment from their retailer as a credit on their account, i.e. \$200 x number of occupied households, and/or \$500 x number of small business tenants. Embedded network operators must then provide the full \$200 and/or \$500 rebate to all eligible residents/tenants on their next electricity bill/invoice.

The department recognises that, in some cases, following the lodgement of claims by the embedded network operator to the retailer by 25 April 2020, there may be a small number of changes in the number of active residential or small business accounts on 30 April 2020. Where this situation arises, embedded network operators are requested to notify their retailer and submit a **reconciliation claim** using the same Form 511 or Form 514.

Information provided on the reconciliation claim should identify only the reconciliation numbers, i.e. the number of residences or small business tenants for which a claim was initially made, but were actually unoccupied on 30 April 2020, or the number of residences or small business tenants not included in the initial claim, but were occupied on 30 April 2020. A statement should be included on the Form 511 or Form 514 clearly identifying that the claim is for additional rebates, or is for the return of excess rebates received. Retailers will need to critically assess information on any reconciliation claim, and apply relevant adjustments to the next bill.

Embedded network operators will need to use **Form 516** (attached) to claim for any additional \$300 supplemental relief payments made to any residential customers within their embedded network who received \$200 (because they are on a residential tariff) but identify as being a sole trader and therefore are eligible to receive the \$500 small business rebate amount.

The relevant forms can be downloaded from the Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors web site:

<https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/community/queensland-government-concessions/information-retailers-service-providers>

Q. What if an embedded network operator submits an incomplete application form?

All required sections of the relevant forms need to be completed and signed by the respective owner/proprietor/manager of the embedded network. This includes ensuring the Proprietor's Declaration is witnessed by another person. (Note the witness does not need to be a Justice of the Peace).

If an incomplete form is submitted, the retailer will need to inform the respective embedded network owner/proprietor/manager and ask that they resubmit a completed form.

Q. What if a customer closes his/her account after the rebate has been applied to the bill? What happens if their final bill is in credit?

Normal retailer business processes would apply in this instance, i.e. any credit against a customer's account will be settled as per the terms and conditions of the customer's contract.

Q. If a customer switches to a different retailer on 30 April 2020, which retailer would be responsible for processing the grant?

To be eligible for the rebates, residential and small business customers must have an active electricity account on 30 April 2020. The retailer who is financially responsible for the premises on 30 April 2020 will be responsible for applying the rebate in the customer's next bill. Depending on their individual billing cycle, customers will start seeing the rebate in their electricity bill from 1 May 2020 onwards.

Q. What if a customer moves house or premises after 30 April 2020?

The utility rebate will be paid on the electricity bill for the account that is active on 30 April 2020 (where the customer resides on this date). The credit will be taken into account in the final bill for that residence/premises that is processed after 30 April 2020.

Q. Will there still be a \$50 Asset Ownership Dividend payment in the second half of 2020, as previously announced?

No, the total Utility Relief Package for households is made up of the \$50 Asset Ownership Dividend (AOD) payment announced for 2020, plus an extra \$150 in response to COVID-19. Future AOD payments are scheduled for 2021 and 2022 (exact timing to be advised).

Q. What if a customer is a sole trader and operating a business from home?

All residential customers (who are supplied on a residential tariff, such as Tariff 11) will automatically receive the \$200 household rebate (this will include sole traders using a residential tariff).

A residential customer who is operating as a sole trader will also receive the \$500 business rebate as long as their business consumption is metered separately to their household consumption (ie on a separate small business tariff, such as Tariff 20), and their total business consumption is less than 100MWh per annum as defined by the National Energy Retail Law.

Therefore, there may be instances where a customer receives two separate rebates. However, to be eligible for *both* the household and business rebates, a sole trader's consumption must be supplied under both a residential and small business tariff (i.e. two eligible accounts).

Q. What if a sole trader is operating a business from home and is on a residential tariff?

All residential customers, including sole traders, who are on a residential tariff should automatically receive the \$200 household rebate.

If a retailer receives a query from a customer operating a business from home who is *not* on a small business tariff, the retailer will need to consider whether the customer is a sole trader (e.g. is the account in a business name, has an ABN been provided etc).

If the retailer is satisfied the customer is a sole trader (and eligible for the small business rebate of \$500), but the customer has already received the \$200 rebate on the basis of being on a residential tariff), the retailer should provide the customer with an additional \$300 credit on their electricity bill, bringing their total relief payment to \$500. Retailers are to use **Form 515** to claim for the additional supplemental amount.

Q. What if a sole trader on a residential tariff is in an embedded network?

A similar process applies to residential sole traders who live in an embedded network. As the sole trader is on a residential tariff, they should have received the \$200 household rebate.

If an embedded network operator receives a query from a resident who is operating a business from home, the embedded network operator will need to consider whether that customer is a sole trader (e.g. is the account in a business name, has an ABN been provided etc).

If they are satisfied the customer is a sole trader, they should apply to their retailer, on behalf of their resident, for the additional \$300 credit and once paid, they will need to apply this to the sole traders' bill (which may be using a residential tariff). Embedded network operators will need to use **Form 516** to claim for the additional supplemental amount.

Q. What if a small business has multiple sites under a consolidated account, or aggregates their load at the retailer contract level?

Further information on the requirements for applying the small business rebate to customers with multiple sites under a consolidated account, or an aggregated load contract, will be provided in mid-April 2020.