

ELECTRICITY PRICE INCREASES HEIGHTEN CONCERNS FOR VULNERABLE AUSTRALIANS

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Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) has expressed deep concern following the Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) final determination for the electricity default market offer (DMO) affecting New South Wales, South Australia, and Queensland.

The determination, released yesterday, will see electricity prices increase between 0.5 percent and 9.7 percent from 1 July 2025, depending on the network area. The most significant impacts will be felt in NSW, where residential customers face up to 9.7 percent increases.

CSSA Executive Director Dr. Jerry Nockles said the decision would disproportionately impact those already struggling to make ends meet and stands in stark contrast to the Government's repeated promises to reduce power prices for Australian households. "This latest electricity price hike represents more than just numbers on a bill – it forces impossible choices upon families already living on the margins," said Dr. Nockles.

"It also reveals a significant failure to deliver on the Government's commitment to reduce power prices for Australians. These ongoing increases directly contradict those promises and leave vulnerable people bearing the burden of that failure".

The price increases come at a time when many low-income households are already making significant sacrifices to afford their energy bills. Catholic social service agencies across the country report seeing clients who are going without food, medication, and other essentials simply to keep their lights on.

"Our member organisations witness daily the impossible decisions faced by vulnerable Australians – whether to heat their homes or put food on the table. This is not a choice any person should have to make in a wealthy country like Australia," Dr. Nockles said. Dr. Nockles also criticised the government's standard advice for consumers to 'shop around' for better deals.

"Telling vulnerable Australians to simply 'shop around' is not good enough. Many lack the time, resources, digital literacy, or English language skills to navigate complex energy markets. Others are trapped in rental properties with no choice over their energy provider or appliances. The onus should not be on struggling families to solve a systemic issue," he said.

CSSA, which represents a network of Catholic social service providers operating in communities throughout Australia, emphasises that the situation highlights the urgent need for targeted support that prioritises those most vulnerable.

“Catholic Social Teaching calls us to uphold a preferential option for the poor – to place the needs of the most vulnerable at the centre of our social and economic policies. This latest price increase demonstrates how our energy system continues to fail in this regard,” said Dr. Nockles.

“Our member organisations will continue providing emergency relief and support services, but charitable responses alone cannot address the systemic issues at play. We need meaningful policy settings that recognises access to affordable energy as essential to human dignity.”

CSSA is calling for:

- Immediate targeted relief for low-income households affected by the price increases
- Greater investment in energy efficiency upgrades for low-income housing
- Energy debt relief for those most severely impacted

“A just energy system must leave no one behind. That means ensuring that our most vulnerable citizens are not bearing the heaviest burden of system changes and market fluctuations,” Dr. Nockles concluded.

Catholic social service organisations continue to provide critical support through emergency relief programs, financial counselling services, and advocacy for those experiencing hardship nationwide.

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Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) advocates for the Church's social service ministry. It is the national peak body for Catholic social service providers. The CSSA's network operates across all Australian States and Territories and has a combined total of over 700 sites.

The national network of Catholic social services