# Overview

* Households struggling to pay their energy bills during COVID-19 now have access to additional financial support, thanks to a $30 million boost to the NSW Government’s Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (**EAPA**) scheme.
* The EAPA scheme provides vouchers to households struggling to pay their energy bills because of a short-term financial crisis or emergency, including because of reduced income due to COVID-19.
* The NSW Government has also created a new way for people to access EAPA vouchers to service the increased demand. Customers can now access EAPA voucher assessments by applying online via Service NSW.
* The NSW Government is also increasing the maximum assessment value of EAPA vouchers from $300 to up to $400 per assessment, twice per year. This means the annual maximum limit of vouchers for a household with both electricity and gas has increased from $1,200 to $1,600.
* When customers apply for EAPA, their EAPA provider (either an approved NGO or the NSW Government) will contact the customer’s energy retailer with the customer to assess the customer for vouchers and help get the customer onto their energy retailer’s hardship plan, if this is the right option for them.
* Hardship plans entitle the customer to a range of customer protections, which have been further bolstered to support customers affected by the economic impacts of COVID-19.
* The EAPA Scheme is complemented by a range of NSW Government energy bill support programs including the:
* Low Income Household Rebate
* Gas Rebate
* Seniors Energy Rebate
* Family Energy Rebate
* Medical Energy Rebate
* Life Support Rebate

# Q&A

## **How can customers apply for EAPA vouchers?**

There are two ways customers can apply for EAPA vouchers.

The first way is via an approved EAPA provider. Customers can find a list of approved EAPA providers on the energy saver website, energysaver.nsw.gov.au under the ‘Help for households facing energy bill stress’ section.

The second way is via Service NSW. Customers who want to apply through Service NSW can go directly to service.nsw.gov.au and search for ‘EAPA’.

Customers will need to provide a range of information to support their application, including copies of their current energy bills, identification and evidence of hardship.

## **How long will the scheme be available?**

## The EAPA Scheme is an ongoing NSW Government emergency bill relief program. The increased support for people affected by COVID-19 will continue for as long as COVID-19 is causing a crisis which is impacting people’s ability to pay their energy bills.

## **Will NGOs still be able to provide EAPA vouchers?**

## Yes – NGOs are integral to the EAPA scheme. They can also offer customers a broader array of other hardship assistance (for example food vouchers, no-interest loans, financial counselling etc). NGOs approved by the NSW Government to assess customers over the phone are still available to provide EAPA vouchers during the COVID-19 crisis. The list of approved EAPA providers is available at energysaver.nsw.gov.au under the ‘Help for households facing energy bill stress’ section.

## **How do the EAPA vouchers work?**

## The EAPA vouchers are applied directly to a customer’s energy account, to ensure the full benefit of the EAPA support goes towards relieving energy bill costs.

## **Do EAPA vouchers apply to gas bills?**

## Customers in financial hardship who receive their gas supply through a metered gas connection can apply for EAPA vouchers for their gas bill.

## **Do the vouchers apply to LPG users?**

## No – customers who use LPG gas bottles for their gas supply cannot apply for EAPA for their LPG gas bottle costs. However, these customers may be eligible for the Gas Rebate. They can learn more about this by visiting service.nsw.gov.au and searching for ‘gas rebate’.