

Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme (HEEAS)

 **Queensland Government**

Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme application form

The Queensland Government helps people who cannot pay their electricity and/or reticulated natural gas bills because of an unexpected short-term financial crisis in the **past 12 months**.

Do you need help to complete this form?

If you need help completing this form, please contact Concession Services on 13 QGOV (13 74 68) (local call charge) or (07) 3247 6204. If you require an interpreter, please telephone 131450.
You can also ask an organisation, a financial counsellor or another representative to help you complete the application.
If you need someone else to act on your behalf, please include their contact details below:

Name of your representative

Organisation

Telephone number or email

Are you eligible to receive this assistance?

HEEAS is a one-off payment of up to \$720 to assist with a debt on an electricity or reticulated natural gas account. Households can only receive HEEAS once every two years.

To receive this help, you must be financially responsible for paying the energy bill in your household **and**:

- hold a current concession card (Health Care Card / Pensioner Card / DVA Gold Card) **or**
- be part of your energy retailer's hardship program or payment plan **or**
- have an annual combined income of \$75 000 or less (you and your partner's income), or \$49 000 or less if you are single.

You **must also** have experienced:

- a substantial decrease in your household income (e.g. loss of employment, family separation, illness, injury or disability) **or**
- high unexpected expenses on essential items.

Completing this application

If you are completing an electronic form, please email **HEEAS@smartservice.qld.gov.au** **or** if you are completing a written form, please post it (in the prepaid envelope provided) to:


Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme
Concession Services
Department of Communities,
Disability Services and Seniors
GPO Box 806
BRISBANE QLD 4001

You will need to complete all sections of this form so your application can be processed. The due date for your application is on page 2.

Privacy notice

The Queensland Government is collecting your personal information to administer and assess your eligibility for assistance under the Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme. This information may be provided to your energy retailer, Centrelink, the Department of Veterans' Affairs and Queensland Shared Services to assess whether you are eligible and to administer the scheme, and we will keep it for up to nine years. We will handle your personal information in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)*. More information about this legislation and the Queensland Government's privacy policy is available at: <https://www.qld.gov.au/legal/privacy/>.





Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme (HEEAS)

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Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme (HEEAS)

- The scheme assists households who have experienced a financial crisis within the past 12 months, and are unable to pay their electricity and/or reticulated natural gas account
- Assistance of up to \$720 may be provided to low-income households, however higher income households may also qualify
- Eligible households can be approved for the grant once in every two year period. The two year period commences from the date of approval of the initial successful grant
- The scheme is targeted as one-off emergency assistance, rather than ongoing support for low income households





Purpose Of The Scheme

To assist with

- ✓ An unexpected or unforeseen occurrence

Not to assist with

- ✗ Low income and high costs of living (including rent, food mobile phone and internet)

Does the application form need to be completed?

- ✓ YES, assessment is based on information provided by the applicant on the application form

If the applicant does not complete the application form correctly, the application may be declined, delayed or returned





The Applicant

The applicant must be responsible for paying the household energy bill

What does this mean?

- ✓ The applicant resides in the household
- ✓ The applicant has authority on the account to be able to discuss account details with the energy provider and in turn apply for HEEAS
- ✓ In the case where the account holder has moved out of the household, we encourage the applicant to have the account transferred into their own name



The Applicant

This assistance is available to applicants:

- ✓ Who hold a current concession card; **OR**
- ✓ Who are registered under their energy provider's hardship or payment plan program with a commitment to a payment plan to manage future payment of energy usage; **OR**
- ✓ Whose base income is no more than the equivalent of the Commonwealth maximum fortnightly income rate for part age pensioners

Applicants must also have experienced:

- ✓ A substantial decrease in the household income in the last 12 months **OR**
- ✓ A high unavoidable and/or unexpected expense on essential items in the last 12 months





The Role of the Energy Provider

- To provide accurate information about the scheme to potential applicants and follow the guidelines of the scheme

Once a customer begins the application process the Energy Provider must:

- Suspend collection/disconnection action on the existing debt
- Initiate the application by completing the details onto the HEEAS mailbox website
- Send an application form to the applicant with a pre-paid envelope, email a copy of the writeable PDF form, or send the URL to the online application form





The Role Of Concession Services

- Provide accurate information and active support to the energy providers
- Conduct assessments of applications, including any special cases outside normal eligibility criteria
- Inform energy providers and applicants of the results of applications
- Provide payment of successful grants





The Role Of Non-Government Organisations (NGO)

A NGO may encounter a customer experiencing difficulty in paying their energy bill and contact the energy providers on their behalf. In the first instance, alternative payment arrangements including instalment plans should be considered

A NGO may discuss the customer's circumstances with the energy provider and, if considered eligible, request an application be forwarded to the customer. As part of the application process, the energy provider may wish to discuss a negotiable instalment arrangement to assist with payment of future accounts

If the NGO has a copy of the writeable PDF HEEAS application form, they can request an application number from the energy provider on the applicants' behalf and then complete and submit the PDF form





Application Process

- The applicant contacts their energy provider and identifies they cannot pay their utility bill
- The customer and energy provider should discuss the available payment options and the company's hardship program
- The energy provider may identify that the person may meet the initial scheme eligibility (e.g. PCC/HCC, low income)
- The energy provider should assess why the customer can't pay their energy bill and if the reason falls within the scheme criteria (e.g. paid for recent car repairs or loss of employment)
- The energy provider should explain how the scheme operates and what is expected of the customer (e.g. form must be filled in completely)
- The energy provider uploads the details into the HEEAS portal and posts, emails out the application form, or sends the URL to the online application form



Issues Energy Providers May Experience

Criteria uncertainty – if energy provider staff are not sure if the reason meets eligibility they can contact Concession Services to confirm

A customer may insist on receiving an application form – if the customer is insistent on having the form sent out after explaining the HEEAS guidelines to them, send the customer the form and it will be assessed by Concession Services

The customer may have already received assistance – check on your system as to whether the customer has received assistance in the past 24 months. If the customer thinks they have received the grant via another energy provider, please check with Concession Services

Be clear about how the scheme works. If you do not feel the customer meets the eligibility requirements, advise them





Delays In The Process

The process can be delayed when:

- The applicant does not receive the form or fails to send it in
- The applicant does not provide enough information on the form for an assessment to be made
- Updated billing information is required for assessment

If an application needs to be extended or reopened within 3 months of original activation, email the request to Concession Services with updated billing information and account balances





Amount Of Grant

Assistance will be provided **once in any 24 month period** and may cover electricity, reticulated natural gas or a combination of both and will be capped at \$720 per client within that period

The application may be unsuccessful because:

- The reason for the application does not fit the eligibility criteria for assistance, or
- The amount outstanding is <\$100, or
- The applicant has been assisted previously within the last 24 months



Final Bills

Assistance with a finalised bill can be considered when the customer/applicant:

- Has closed their account and vacated the premises within the previous 60 days of receipt of the application, and the account is still held within the provider billing system; **OR**
- Extenuating circumstances of natural disasters or domestic violence may be considered within the previous 6 months on a case by case basis. These must be referred to Concession Services in the first instance by the energy provider

If the debt has been referred to a debt collection agency, the customer cannot apply for HEEAS



Eligibility Criteria

Reason for your application

For your application to be considered, you must have experienced either a decrease in income or had a high unexpected expense **in the past 12 months**. Expenses such as telephone, rates, water, school expenses and other expected bills **will not be considered**.

Please note: We may ask you to provide documents or receipts for repairs/purchases to verify this information.

Section 1 (please complete if your household income has decreased substantially)

	Date	Fortnightly income before	Fortnightly income after
Decrease in Centrelink benefits	Date of change	\$ [] / [] / []	\$ []
Please specify reason for decrease: []			
Marriage/defacto separation	Date separated	\$ [] / [] / []	\$ []
Housemate or family member moved out	Date moved out	\$ [] / [] / []	\$ []
Death of immediate family member living in my household	Date of death	\$ [] / [] / []	\$ []
Child maintenance stopped or decreased	Date stopped/ decreased	\$ [] / [] / []	\$ []
Decrease in hours of work	Date hours of work decreased	\$ [] / [] / []	\$ []
Loss of employment	Date stopped work	\$ [] / [] / []	\$ []

Section 2 (please complete if you have had high unexpected expenses on essential items)

		Date paid
<input type="checkbox"/> Refrigerator/washing machine repair or purchase	\$ []	[] / [] / []
(Payment Plan or Finance fortnightly payment details)	\$ []	[] / [] / []
<input type="checkbox"/> Hot water service repair or purchase, not water charges	\$ []	[] / [] / []
<input type="checkbox"/> Car repairs, not including registration or services	\$ []	[] / [] / []
<input type="checkbox"/> Direct funeral expenses, not including travel	\$ []	[] / [] / []
<input type="checkbox"/> Removalist expenses	\$ []	[] / [] / []
<input type="checkbox"/> Once off medical expenses not covered by Medicare (including dental and optical).	\$ []	[] / [] / []

Please provide details below:

[]

Other unexpected expenses

\$ []

[] / [] / []

Please provide details below:

[]



Eligibility Criteria

All circumstances in the application must have occurred in the last 12 months.

The applicant must have experienced:

- High unavoidable or unexpected expense on essential items as noted on Section 2 of the application **OR**
- Substantial decrease in household income as noted in Section 1 of the application (e.g. loss of employment, decrease in hours of work) **OR**
- Other reason where the applicant demonstrates a significant financial impact (e.g. fire, flood, domestic or family violence situation)

Please note: Housing cost increases and energy price/cost increases are not eligible for HEEAS



High Unexpected Expenses

Section 2 (please complete if you have had high unexpected expenses on essential items)

		Date paid
<input type="checkbox"/> Refrigerator/washing machine repair or purchase	\$ <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/>
(Payment Plan or Finance fortnightly payment details)	\$ <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Hot water service repair or purchase, not water charges	\$ <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Car repairs, not including registration or services	\$ <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Direct funeral expenses, not including travel	\$ <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Removalist expenses	\$ <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Once off medical expenses not covered by Medicare (including dental and optical).	\$ <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/>

Please provide details below:

Other unexpected expenses

\$

/ /

Please provide details below:



High Unexpected Expenses

- ✓ **Direct funeral expenses** of an immediate family member. Associated costs (such as travel/accommodation) will not be considered
- ✓ **Relocation expenses** – includes bond and removal costs, i.e. hire of truck or trailer. Rent arrears will not be considered
- ✓ **Car repairs** - standard regular car service/registration or insurance will not be considered. If the applicant needs to replace an essential vehicle, the costs may be considered
- ✓ **Purchase and repairs** to a hot water service, refrigerator, washing machine, water pump or other essential household items
- ✓ **Substantial unexpected medical expenses** not covered by Medicare. High travel costs to attend medical care over 500kms one way may be considered

Please note: Hot water service purchase or repair costs will only be considered in instances where the applicant owns the property



High Unexpected Expenses

Expenses not included in this category are:

- Expected expenses:
 - Bills e.g. registration, phone bill, water bill and internet bill
 - School expenses
 - Christmas
 - Vet bills
 - Costs of someone moving into the household
- Medical expenses incurred by someone who does not reside in the household
- Travelling to see sick relative
- The cost of attending a funeral
- General cost of living expenses e.g. food and clothing
- Purchase of household appliances e.g. microwave, TV and computer





What Do We Look For On The Form?

Key items:

- Description of the expense – is it acceptable?
- When it was incurred – was it in the last 12 months?
- The cost – to be considered a high cost the expense should be over \$100
- Applicant signature

If the applicant has not already incurred the expense (not paid for) we will not accept it as a reason for application e.g. quote for repair work



Decrease In Income

Section 1 (please complete if your household income has decreased substantially)

	Date	Fortnightly Income before	Fortnightly Income after
Decrease In Centrelink benefits	Date of change	\$	\$
Please specify reason for decrease: <input type="text"/>			
Marriage/defacto separation	Date separated	\$	\$
Housemate or family member moved out	Date moved out	\$	\$
Death of immediate family member living in my household	Date of death	\$	\$
Child maintenance stopped or decreased	Date stopped/ decreased	\$	\$
Decrease in hours of work	Date hours of work decreased	\$	\$
Loss of employment	Date stopped work	\$	\$



Substantial Decrease in Household Income

What Is Considered:

- ✓ Loss of employment
- ✓ Decreased hours of work
- ✓ Relationship or family breakdown or separation
- ✓ Late/ceased/decreased child maintenance payments
- ✓ Loss of family member income
- ✓ Ceased or substantially decreased Centrelink payments



Substantial decrease in household income

Decreases in income not considered:

- Decreases of income which are not substantial (e.g. under \$100 per fortnight)
- Decreases of income which started over 12 months ago
- Centrelink payments which are decreased due to deductions or repayment of loan
- Income not enough to live on

Please note: Decreases in income due to the reduction of the COVID-19 supplement will not be considered





What Do We Look For On The Form?

Key Items:

- Reason for the decrease – is it acceptable?
- When did the decrease begin? Was it in the last 12 months?
- How much income has the applicant lost?

If the reason is over 12 months ago or not a substantial amount the application will not be considered.





Other Reasons

- ✓ Natural disasters
- ✓ Leaving a domestic or family violence situation

These situations are individually case managed by Concession Services and a financial impact must still be demonstrated by the applicant. Please contact Concession Services to discuss eligibility for extenuating circumstances in the first instance





Additional Information

Low income and high daily living expenses (such as rent, food, mobile phone and internet expenses) will not be favourably considered based on this reason alone.

The customer must also have experienced *an unexpected or unforeseen occurrence* as listed on previous slides.

To reiterate, this scheme is not to be viewed as “income support”

Comments in mailbox such as “SPP, high rent, high bills” or “struggling customer on DSP”, “hardship, high bills” or “information on application form” do not add value to the assessment process

Comments which show the reason why the application form was sent by the energy provider add value to the assessment process. This includes comment such as car repairs, loss of employment and washing machine purchase.





Issues And Appeals

- Customers may require additional time to complete and return the application form. The applicant can request an extension by contacting either the energy provider or Concession Services
- Customers may want to apply for subsequent applications. It is recommended providers limit requests for new forms and extensions to three instances
- Customers may appeal a declined decision. The appeal must be lodged within 28 days from date of notification of decision
- Receipts or documentation substantiating the appeal and meeting the eligibility criteria must be provided





Questions

Please contact Concession Services with your queries:

07 3022 0801

heeasenquiries@smartservice.qld.gov.au

Please email applications from customers to

heas@smartservice.qld.gov.au





Contact Details

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