

United Energy

Customer Vulnerability Strategy

Supporting customers in vulnerable circumstances with fair, safe and affordable access to energy.

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Acknowledgement of Country

United Energy acknowledges and respects the Bunurong and Wurundjeri People as the original Custodians of the lands and waters our network covers; lands First Peoples have occupied for tens of thousands of years.

United Energy pays our respects to Elders past and present and acknowledge their ancient and continuing connection to Country.

About United Energy's Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan artwork

The Aboriginal artwork used with our Acknowledgement of Country has been created by Kobi Sainty, a Bunurong Palawa contemporary artist. Kobi created United Energy's Reflect Reconciliation artwork and owns Kobi Sainty Art.



Electricity has never been more important to everyday life.

As an essential service provider, we recognise some customers will need additional support at different times to safely and confidently manage their energy.

Through our conversations with customers, communities and stakeholders, we have heard a clear message: vulnerability is changing. It is not always visible and it is not always permanent.

People can move in and out of challenging circumstances for many reasons, including changes in personal circumstances, unexpected life events or the impacts of extended power outages.

As a distribution network, we see firsthand how deeply electricity connects to safety, wellbeing and opportunity. Our responsibility is not only to keep power flowing but to help ensure customers can access the support and information they need when circumstances become harder.

Our vision is to support customers in vulnerable circumstances with fair, safe and affordable access to energy while safeguarding them from harm.

This strategy strengthens our understanding of vulnerability, clarifies our unique role as a distribution business and guides the design and delivery of practical initiatives that make a difference for the customers and communities we serve.



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Understanding vulnerability

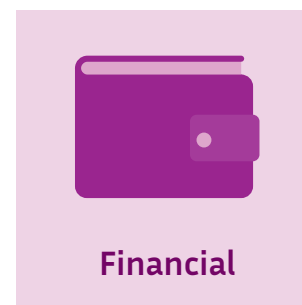
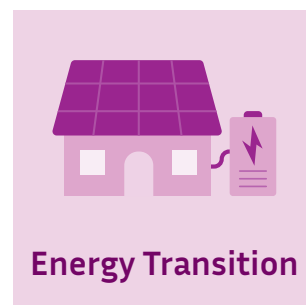
Vulnerability is not a label. It describes circumstances that can make it harder for individuals and small-to-medium businesses to access and manage energy safely, affordably and with confidence.

As providers of an essential service, we understand electricity is central to everyday life, from heating and cooking to communication, medical equipment and business operations.

Factors impacting vulnerability, may include the following circumstances:

- **Energy Transition** – customers may face barriers to participating in a changing energy system.
- **Financial** – cost pressures may make it harder to manage energy use, upgrades or unexpected expenses.
- **Psychological** – outages, emergencies or complex energy issues may create stress, uncertainty or concern.
- **Informational** – customers may face barriers to accessing, understanding or applying information needed to make informed energy decisions and access available support.
- **Community** – local circumstances may affect resilience, access to services and the support available when it is needed most.

When these factors become more challenging, the risk of experiencing vulnerability increases. This can make it harder to manage energy costs, respond to disruptions or access the information and support needed to make informed decisions.



Vulnerability can affect anyone at different times of life and may be influenced by changing personal, financial and community circumstances. Recognising that circumstances can change over time, our strategy focuses on understanding context rather than fixed categories.

Our priorities focus on where we can make the greatest practical difference

We work in partnership with communities, stakeholders and experienced community partners to strengthen support where it is needed most.

		
Fair access	Practical support	Capability
Supporting customers in vulnerable circumstances to access essential energy services safely and confidently.	Providing assistance, reassurance and protection during periods of financial pressure, disruption or change.	Building the knowledge and confidence customers need to make informed decisions and access trusted information.

Energy choices are becoming more complex for some customers as electrification increases

More homes and businesses are adopting electric technologies, rooftop solar and batteries. With these changes come new decisions about technology, cost, reliability and system upgrades.

While the energy transition brings long-term benefits, it can also create pressure for customers facing high upfront costs, financial constraints or limited access to clear information.

The energy transition will only succeed if customers are supported to participate safely and confidently, particularly renters and others who may face barriers accessing new technologies.

For some customers, these changes can make everyday energy decisions harder, from managing higher costs to understanding new technology.

For others, outages can disrupt daily life, interrupt routines and create additional concern when electricity is needed for medical equipment or other essential services.

Renters and customers facing financial pressure may also find it harder to access new energy opportunities.

Together, these experiences highlight why practical, targeted support matters.





As a distributor, our role is practical, local and trusted

Customers may change energy retailers over time, but our relationship with the communities we serve is enduring.

Unlike other parts of the energy sector, we are embedded in local communities across our network. Our depots, field crews and employees are part of the communities they serve.

We build long-term relationships with customers, councils, emergency services and community organisations. These relationships help us understand how changing circumstances, outages and energy challenges affect different communities.

Our independence from energy retailers and technology providers means customers can turn to us for practical, trusted information as energy choices become more complex.

We respond during outages and emergencies, maintain and upgrade the network and work closely with communities to support safety, reliability and resilience.

Through this role, we continue to strengthen our understanding of customer and community needs and adapt our support as those needs evolve.

We are delivering practical support where it makes the greatest difference

Across our network, we deliver a range of services and initiatives that support customers in vulnerable circumstances, including:

- assistance for 30,000 life support customers across our networks, including proactive communication and welfare checks during outages
- multilingual communication and interpreter services across websites, outage updates, key information campaigns and via our local 24/7 contact centre.
- community energy literacy and preparedness programs delivered through local engagement and community events
- practical guidance to support customers navigating electrification, renewable energy and network connections
- on-the-ground support services delivered through field teams and response vehicles.

Our teams work directly with customers every day, from connecting homes and businesses, to the network to supporting communities during outages, severe weather events and complex energy situations.

These services are designed to provide reassurance, connection and practical assistance when customers need it most.



Rising costs and changing energy needs are creating new pressures for some customers

Feedback from customers and stakeholders tells us that some households and small to medium businesses need additional support to manage increasing energy complexity and cost pressures.

From July 2026, we are introducing two new programs designed to reduce barriers to safe, affordable and reliable energy access.



Vulnerable Customer Assistance Program

Reducing energy-related hardship by lowering barriers to electrification and addressing essential infrastructure needs for customers in vulnerable circumstances.

Financial assistance may be available for:

- fuse upgrades
- pit installations
- private-to-public overhead line transitions
- minor customer repairs

These upgrades help ensure customers can safely connect and benefit from new electric technologies.



Energy Care Community Grants

Improving energy literacy and providing practical support to customers experiencing vulnerability through partnerships with trusted community organisations.

This program focuses on building confidence, understanding and informed decision-making so customers can better manage energy use, access support and reduce overall energy costs.

Our approach to supporting customers in vulnerable circumstances

The following framework brings together our vision, commitments and practical initiatives into a single, coordinated approach.

 Ongoing initiatives
 New initiatives

Our pillars to addressing vulnerability	 Energy Transition Ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate in the energy transition.	 Financial Deliver an affordable energy supply and assistance to those facing financial vulnerability.	 Psychological Provide services that offer reassurance when people need it most.	 Informational Equip people with timely, accurate and meaningful information for understanding and decision making.	 Community Connect with communities to deliver coordinated support and ensure localised resilience.
Initiatives	Provide targeted financial assistance to enable essential infrastructure upgrades and electrification.		Deploy emergency response vehicles in affected communities.		
	Increase customers' energy literacy through trusted community partnerships.		Supporting customers charge devices, access communications, banking services.		
			Provide ongoing information flow about restoration times.		
	Actively manage demand and usage patterns.	Engage with government to support health risk customers.	Solve complex customer needs during prolonged outages.		Engage with support services organisations and communities.
	Prepare for emerging energy markets.	Contribute to financial counselling industry fund.	Reassure customers during outages, via our contact centre and field teams.		Inform community and media of outages and risk.
	Deepen understanding of the impacts of the energy transition.	Provide information about energy use and assets.			Reconnect and repair the network.
					Restore outages, prioritising critical community hubs.
					Prepare and respond to extreme weather with stakeholders.

Supporting customers through change

As the energy system changes, some customers will experience periods where managing energy becomes harder.

Our responsibility is to recognise those moments early and respond with practical, fair and targeted support.

We will continue working alongside governments, communities and partners to strengthen our approach as the transition accelerates.

Ensuring customers in vulnerable circumstances are not left behind will remain central to our work.

We will monitor our progress annually over the next five years.



More information

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