

# Synergy Electricity Customer Charter

Our commitment to you.



## We've got the energy to help

Our energy is changing. WA is on a journey to evolve our state's energy generation to include more renewable sources. Solar connects to batteries, that connect to homes, that connect to windfarms, that connect to businesses. And the connections don't stop.

As WA steps into a more sustainable future, we're here for you. We have a range of support services and tools to help you manage your electricity use and your Synergy account, including our self-serve My Account portal, a range of payment options and our blog to inspire your energy future.

The next few pages will take you through the services we can offer you, as well as outlining our commitment to how we can serve you best. Step by step, WA is building a more sustainable future – and we're here to lead the way.

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# Our commitment to you

This charter is our commitment to giving you the best possible service. It outlines your rights, obligations and what you can expect as a valued Synergy customer, including the roles and responsibilities for Synergy, as your retailer and for you, our customer.

It's a bit wordy, but the Code of Conduct for the Supply of Energy to Small Use Customers (or Customer Service Code for short) offers further details on your rights and responsibilities as a valued Synergy customer. And of course, you still have rights under the Competition and Consumer Act.

The Customer Service Code applies to 'small use customers'. Those are energy users who consume less than 160MWh of electricity per year (that's an average of 440 units per day).

The Economic Regulation Authority (ERA) sets the minimum customer service standards that you can expect from your energy provider. But we don't just want to meet the minimum requirements; we want to exceed them.

If you are not or no longer a small use customer, and consume over 160MWh a year, the Customer Service Code doesn't apply to you.

To learn more about the Customer Service Code, visit **erawa.com.au** 

#### **Acknowledgement of Country**

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Synergy acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Land on which we operate and their continuing connection to the land, water and community. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, their cultures and to Elders past, present and emerging.



<sup>\*</sup>The SWIS extends from Kalbarri in the north, east to Kalgoorlie and south to Albany.

## How we fit in

You probably don't think about it when you flick on the lights or charge your smart phone or tablet, but the energy we use goes from generation to distribution and finally to supply. Synergy is Western Australia's largest power generator and provider of gas and electricity to more than one million residential and business customers.

We operate as an energy retailer in an area known as the South West Interconnected System or SWIS\*.

We can help you with connections and disconnections when you move premises, offer advice on our products (such as different types of electricity tariffs), provide you with paperless bills and answer your account queries. We also offer ideas to help you manage your energy use, and easy to implement energy efficiency tips.

#### **Transporting electricity**

Western Power is responsible for transporting electricity from the generators to your premises in the SWIS. They own, operate and maintain the electricity network. The network consists of power lines, substations, metering equipment, control centres and meters.

Western Power provides energy data (such as meter readings) to Synergy, which we then use to bill you for the electricity you have consumed.

## **Staying connected**

#### Are you moving?

When moving, you'll need to close your existing account and open a new one for your new premises.

Please let us know before you move in or out:

- 3 business days before, if your address is in Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie or the Perth metropolitan area; or
- 5 business days before, if your address is outside of those areas.

This is so we can arrange for Western Power to take a final meter reading on or as close to your moving date as possible. Please let us know if we need to make any special arrangements with Western Power to access the meter to avoid having an estimated final bill.

To establish a new account or close an existing account, call us on **13 13 53** for residential customers or **13 13 54** for business customers. As a Synergy customer, you need to:

- · Close your account;
- Supply a forwarding address so we can send you your final bill and your new contact details (even if you don't need a new account);
- Tell any friends or family who remain at the residence to establish a new account in their own name; and
- Set up your new account at your new address.

If you don't close your account and provide us with a forwarding address when you move, you will continue to be charged for any electricity used at your previous address for up to 5 days after we are notified you have moved. For example, if you leave the residence and forget to close your account and friends or family continue to live there, you will be charged for any electricity they use after you leave. Please contact us as soon as possible if you are evicted or have to leave your address.

If you are moving into premises where electricity is already connected you still need to set up your new account. Please keep in mind that notifying us of your move is your responsibility and not the responsibility of your estate agent, landlord or settlement agent.

Once you move into the premises, in order to set up your account quickly and correctly, please quote your meter number when calling us (especially if your new premises involves a unit, shop or lot number). Supplying your new meter number is important to make sure you don't end up paying for someone else's electricity or get disconnected if they do not pay their bills.

For this reason, it also makes sense to check the meter number shown on your first bill against the meter number displayed on your meter and ensure they match. You can easily open your new account online at any time on our our website:

- For residential customers
   synergy.net.au/my\_home\_application
- For business customers synergy.net.au/my\_business\_application

If you are moving into a premises that has no electricity supply, please call us on **13 13 53** for residential customers or **13 13 54** for business customers, to ensure your power is connected as soon as possible.

Our service level agreement with Western Power ensures reconnection between 1 to 6 business days depending on your location.

If you are moving into new premises and require life support equipment please refer to information on page 13.

#### Are you building?

#### What you need to do

You may not be aware that when building you need to set up an account before the plans are finalised.

#### What we do

We will send you confirmation of your connection details and the supply address at your premises.

#### **What Western Power does**

Once a final notice of completion is received from your electrical contractor, Western Power will connect electricity to your new premises. Your electrical contractor needs to provide a notice of completion to Western Power.

#### If you can't pay your bill

Everyone's circumstances are different and may change. If you're having difficulties paying your bill on time, it's better to let us know sooner rather than later, so that we can help you find the right solution.

Subject to the Customer Service Code, if you don't pay your bill on time and in full, amongst other options available to us, we can:

- · Send you a disconnection warning;
- Charge you an overdue account notice fee for each overdue account;
- Charge you interest on the amount you have not paid; or
- Disconnect your electricity supply.

If you do not pay the total amount payable for any bill after we send a disconnection warning, we can refer your debt to a debt collection agency for recovery of unpaid amounts.

If we do so, you will have to pay any costs we incur to recover the unpaid bill, including the agency's fees and legal fees.

#### **Disconnection**

Although we do our best to avoid it, there are times when we have to disconnect the electricity supply to your property.

In any of the circumstances listed below, Synergy or Western Power may (without limiting any other options available to us) arrange for disconnection of the electricity supply to your premises if:

- You have moved into the premises without telling us and have not established an electricity account; or
- You receive a disconnection warning for non-payment and we still have not received payment of your account by the date specified in the warning; or
- · You have obtained electricity illegally; or
- You have denied Western Power access to the meter at your premises for more than 12 consecutive months; or
- In the event of a power supply emergency or a planned or unplanned outage.

In the event that disconnection of electricity for non-payment is necessary, we will take a number of prior steps to try and keep you connected, including:

- Send you a bill;
- Send you a payment reminder including our contact number for billing and payment enquiries and advice on how we can assist if you are experiencing payment problems;
- Use our best endeavours to contact you by telephone or electronically (if you have provided us with your relevant contact details);
- Send you a disconnection warning; and
- Provide alternative payment arrangements and, where eligible, arrange concessions or rebates to assist you paying your bill.

Please call us on **13 13 53** for residential customers or **13 13 54** for business customers if you are experiencing payment problems.

We will not proceed to disconnection in any circumstance where we are prohibited from doing so, by the Customer Service Code, in the following instances:

 If you are medically certified as requiring life support equipment (as defined under the Customer Service Code) and you have successfully applied to Synergy for life support equipment registration; or

- If you are a residential customer and your outstanding bill amount is less than \$300 and you contact us and agree to pay this amount; or
- After 3pm Monday to Thursday, after 12 noon on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday or public holiday, or on the business day prior to a public holiday; or
- If you are adhering to your obligation to make payments in accordance with an agreed payment plan or other payment arrangement relating to the payment of a bill; or
- If you have applied for a concession and a decision on the application has not yet been made; or
- If you have made a complaint directly related to the reason for the proposed disconnection to Synergy, Western Power or the Energy and Water Ombudsman, and the complaint remains unresolved.

If we fail to follow the required procedures (specified in the Customer Service Code) prior to disconnecting you for failure to pay your bill, you will be eligible to receive a wrongful disconnection service standard payment of \$100 for each day you remain wrongfully disconnected.

#### Reconnection

If the reason you were disconnected has been sorted out, call us and we'll get Western Power to reconnect you. Have your meter number handy to avoid any mix-ups with your bill and to make the process smoother. A reconnection fee will be charged and will appear on your next bill.

If we do not follow required procedures to reconnect you, as specified in the Customer Service Code, you can request a late reconnection service standard payment from us. Following your reconnection request, a payment of \$60 per day applies (up to a maximum of \$300) for the period that your electricity supply remains disconnected. If you wish to submit a request for payment, you can do so by contacting us within 3 months of your request for reconnection.

When your reason for disconnection no longer exists, and you have contacted us to organise reconnection, we will arrange for Western Power to reconnect your electricity:

#### Metro areas

- If your premises are located in the Perth metropolitan area or the major centres of Bunbury, Albany, Kalgoorlie or Geraldton, any request for reconnection received by Synergy before 3pm on a business day will be forwarded to Western Power that same day.
- If your request is received by Synergy before 2pm on a business day, reconnection by Western Power will occur on the next business day.
- If we receive your request after 3pm on a business day, Saturday, Sunday or public holiday, reconnection by Western Power will only occur within 2 business days of your request.

#### **Regional areas**

- If your premises are located outside the above city centres, any request for reconnection received by Synergy before 3pm, on a business day, will be forwarded to Western Power that same day.
- If your request is received by Synergy before 2pm on a business day, reconnection by Western Power will occur within 5 business days.
- If we receive your request after 3pm on a business day, or on a Saturday, Sunday or public holiday, reconnection by Western Power will only occur within 6 business days.

If we are unable to arrange reconnection of your supply within the above timeframes, due to events outside our control or the control of Western Power, you may be eligible to apply for a service standard payment under the Customer Service Code. In such cases, a payment of \$60 per day applies for the period that your electricity remains disconnected, beyond the standard number of service days stated above (up to a maximum of \$300).

If you wish to apply for one of these service standard payments, you must do so within 3 months of our failure to reconnect you.

#### **Access to your meter**

In order for us to send you an accurate bill, Western Power will need access to your meter to get a reading.

If the meter reader can't get access, we'll send you an estimated bill until we can get an actual meter reading.

It's not a good idea to rely on estimates, as you may end up paying too much or too little. That could mean a much bigger bill down the track.

#### How we calculate your bill

Western Power reads your meter at regular intervals and supplies us with the information to produce your bill. The information we receive from Western Power is called 'meter data' or 'energy data'. This data is obtained from actual meter readings or estimated meter readings. Synergy is required to use the data when calculating your bill.

We calculate your bill by applying your nominated electricity tariff to the data, to obtain what we refer to as 'billing data'.

Western Power is responsible for the meter/energy data and Synergy is responsible for billing data.

If, for any reason, you feel the amount on your bill is not what you expected, simply call **13 13 53** for residential customers or **13 13 54** for business customers and we will review your bill.

#### **Paying your bill**

We offer a range of bill payment options for your convenience, including the ability to make payment online through My Account at synergy.net.au/MyAccount

You will find more options on your bill or on our website at synergy.net.au/billing

#### **Payment issues**

Sometimes changes in your household, community and even global events can have an impact on your electricity use, your situation and your income. We're here to help and make sure no one is left behind.

You might need a bit more time to pay your Synergy bill, a payment arrangement to pay in smaller amounts or ways to find other support you might need. We have a range of different payment and support options available to help.

It is important that you contact us if you need some help to pay your Synergy bill. Please call us on **13 13 53** for residential customers or **13 13 54** for business customers. You can also visit **synergy.net.au/billhelp** to view our bill help options.



# A closer look at your energy use

A good way to identify areas where you may be able to save energy and money is an energy audit. Visit **synergy.net.au/energytips** to learn more about what contributes to your electricity bill and how you can make small changes to impact this. There are also companies around WA who offer qualified home or business energy audits.

Another way to save energy is to purchase energy efficient appliances. Those little star rating labels you see on your fridge, washing machine, tumble dryer and other appliances provide you with an easy way to compare the energy efficiency of different appliances. The more stars an appliance has, the higher its energy efficiency. If you want to know more about the energy ratings and consumption of certain appliances, visit energyrating.gov.au

# Life support equipment

We know that for some of our customers, keeping you connected is vital. If you, or someone at your premises uses life support equipment, you need to register this equipment with us.

Visit **synergy.net.au/lifesupport** for more information about life support equipment registration, or call us on **13 13 53** for residential customers or **13 13 54** for business customers. You will need to complete the Life Support Equipment Registration form, and have it signed by a qualified medical practitioner.

Following receipt of a complete and correct application we will register your nominated home or business premises (including your current contact details) as a life support equipment address. We also provide this information to Western Power so they can register your life support equipment details.

Under the Customer Service Code, life support equipment registration provides important protections, including;

- While a person continues to reside at the address and requires the use of life support equipment, Synergy and Western Power must not arrange for disconnection of a customer's electricity supply for failure to pay a bill; and
- Western Power must provide the customer's supply address with prior notice of planned interruptions to the electricity supply at that address.

It is important that you immediately advise us of any changes to the life support equipment use or registration at your supply address. If life support equipment is no longer required at the address or if your contact details, telephone number, supply address or postal address change, please contact us.

In the event of a planned or unplanned power outage, it is important for Western Power to know where genuine users of life support equipment are located. The wellbeing of a life support user may require emergency or other action to be taken. If there's an unplanned power outage you may need to take urgent action to ensure life support users at your premises are safe, so make sure your contact details are up-to-date.

Please make sure you apply correctly and honestly for life support. An incorrect registration may create a false impression that human life or safety may be endangered in the event of a power outage. That in turn can mean valuable time is lost as limited resources are diverted to attend a premises without life support equipment. In doing this, the health and safety of other genuine life support equipment users will be at risk by the delays or diversions that can be caused by such 'false alarms'.

If you or someone that resides at your supply address is a life support equipment user, you may be eligible for the State Government's Life Support Equipment Subsidy or Thermoregulatory Dysfunction Energy Subsidy. These provide financial support to people who are dependent on medical equipment in their homes. You can find out more, including subsidy amounts and eligibility by visiting synergy.net.au/concessions

## **Concessions** and rebates

If you, or someone living with you, holds a valid concession card\*, you may be eligible for a rebate off your electricity bill.

The available rebates depend on which concession card an eligible person holds. Please see the accompanying list to establish which rebate you may be entitled to.

#### **Eligibility** Rebate

#### Account **Establishment**

- · Health Care Card
- Fee Rebate
- Pensioner Concession Card
- Veterans' Affairs Gold Card (this includes War Widow, Dependent, and those who are Totally and Permanently Incapacitated)
- · Veterans' Affairs Pensioner **Concession Card**

#### WA Government • Health Care Card

- Energy Assistance **Payment**
- Pensioner Concession Card
- Veterans' Affairs Gold Card (this includes War Widow, Dependent, and those who are Totally and Permanently Incapacitated)
- Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card

#### Dependent **Child Rebate**

- Must have at least 1 dependent child listed on card
- Health Care Card
- Pensioner Concession Card
- · Veterans' Affairs Gold Card (this includes War Widow, Dependent, and those who are Totally and Permanently Incapacitated)
- · Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card

## **Test Fee**

- Reduced Meter Health Care Card
  - Pensioner Concession Card
  - Veterans' Affairs Gold Card (this includes War Widow, Dependent, and those who are Totally and Permanently Incapacitated)
  - · Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card

#### Rebate

#### Eligibility

#### I ate

#### **Payment Fee**

(fee waived for two notices per year only)

- Health Care Card
- Pensioner Concession Card
- · Veterans' Affairs Gold Card (this includes War Widow, Dependent, and those who are Totally and Permanently Incapacitated)
- · Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card
- WA Seniors Card or Commonwealth Seniors Health Card

#### Air Conditioning Rebate

(Available to customers who live in areas north of the 26th Parallel and/ or north of the 50 **Day Relative Strain** index line (defined locations))

In addition to living in a defined location, customers must hold a WA Seniors Card and either a:

- Commonwealth Seniors Health Card or
- Pensioner Concession Card or
- Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card

Customers are also eligible if they live in the defined locations, have dependent children, and hold one of the following:

- · Health Care Card
- Pensioner Concession Card or
- Veterans' Gold Card
- · Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card

#### Life Support **Equipment Electricity**

Subsidy (apply to the Office of State Revenue at finance.wa.gov.au)

- · Health Care Card (not including the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card)
- · Health Care Interim Voucher
- · Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card
- Pensioner Concession Card

#### Dysfunction **Energy Subsidy**

**Scheme** 

(apply to the Office of State Revenue at finance.wa.gov.au)

- Thermoregulatory Health Care Card (not including the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card)
  - Health Care Interim Voucher
  - · Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card
  - Pensioner Concession Card

For more details on rebates and concessions, including a list of eligible Air Conditioning Rebate towns, please visit synergy.net.au/rebates.

To apply for a rebate off your electricity bill, please call us on **13 13 53** and we will take your application over the phone.

We validate your concession card details regularly, so please make sure you keep your records up to date with us, and your concession card provider. When you get a new card or if your circumstances change and you no longer hold a valid card, you are obliged to notify us.

If you are a My Account customer, you can update your concession online by visiting synergy.net.au/MyAccount

\*Eligible concession cards are issued by Centrelink, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, and the WA Seniors Card Centre.

# Complaints and feeback

Although we try to do the right thing, we know sometimes you might have a complaint.

We'll listen to your complaint and do everything we can to resolve it. Please start by calling our customer service team, who are trained to handle your complaint in accordance with our Complaint Resolution Policy.

There are some organisations, such as credit repair agencies, who may seek to act on your behalf when dealing with your complaint. These organisations may charge you fees for acting on your behalf. To avoid these fees you can choose to deal with us direct, as we don't charge a fee for handling your complaint. You can view our Complaint Resolution Policy at synergy.net.au/complaints or you can contact us for a copy.

Our customer service team are here to help. Please call us on **13 13 53** for residential customers or **13 13 54** for business customers.

You may be eligible to apply for a service standard payment under the Customer Service Code if:

- We fail to acknowledge your written complaint within 10 business days; or
- We fail to respond to the issues raised in your written complaint within 20 business days (unless these failures occurred due to events or conditions outside of Synergy or Western Power's control).

Requests for a service standard payment must be submitted within 3 months of our failure to acknowledge or respond to your complaint.

If you believe that we have been unable to resolve your complaint satisfactorily, and your complaint is within the jurisdiction of the Energy and Water Ombudsman, you may wish to contact them on:

- Phone: (08) 9220 7588 or freecall 1800 754 004 (free from landlines)
- Email: energyandwater@ombudsman.wa.gov.au
- Website: energyandwater.ombudsman.wa.gov.au

Please note that you must call Synergy before contacting the Energy and Water Ombudsman as they cannot deal with your complaint unless you have given us the opportunity to resolve it first.

## **Contracts**

#### **Standard Electricity Agreement**

The majority of our customers are supplied with electricity under our Standard Electricity Agreement. This contract contains many important terms and conditions you should be aware of.

The terms of our Standard Electricity Agreement are governed by regulations and are approved by the Economic Regulation Authority.

You are free to choose the Standard Electricity
Agreement, unless you have an outstanding debt and
have not entered into a payment arrangement to repay
the amount owing, or have a payment arrangement but
failed to honour it. If you have entered into a contract via
door to door marketing or it is an unsolicited consumer
agreement (under the Australian Consumer Law) your
contract will include a cooling off period.

#### Non-standard agreement

If you generally consume about \$16,000 per year, you may be eligible for a non-standard agreement. To obtain a quote, visit synergy.net.au/quote

A non-standard agreement can include different terms and conditions, variations in price, contract length and payment options. They are negotiated directly with you and don't require approval by the Economic Regulation Authority. However, these contracts must comply with relevant regulations.

If your contract was via a door-to-door marketer or unsolicited consumer agreement, the Australian Consumer Law protects you and the contract will be subject to a cooling off period. The contract has to meet the minimum standards as outlined in the Electricity Industry (Consumer Contract) Regulations 2005.

## Contractual matters to be aware of

You can ask us for a copy of the Standard Electricity Agreement at the time you enter into your contract with us. We will send you a copy no later than 5 days after the contract is entered into.

If the contract is an unsolicited consumer agreement under the Australian Consumer Law, you do not need to ask for a copy if:

- The contract was negotiated by phone. In this instance, we must supply you a copy of the agreement within 5 business days after the agreement was made or longer, as we may agree with you; or
- The contract was not negotiated by phone, we must supply you a copy of the agreement immediately after you sign it.

In any case, you may view a copy of the Standard Electricity Agreement by visiting **synergy.net.au/standardcontract** by calling us on **13 13 53** for residential customers or **13 13 54** for business customers.

#### **Tariffs**

If you meet the eligibility requirements, we will place you on the electricity tariff you request.

If your electricity supply circumstances change at any time, you will need to contact us as this may affect your tariff eligibility. In addition, there may be alternate standard prices more appropriate to your changed electricity needs. For example, you might start a business from home or your business' electricity needs significantly increase due to longer operating hours or increased machinery on site.

You can find out more about our prices and fees at synergy.net.au/prices

# How to set up an account

You can easily set up your account online through My Account at synergy.net.au/MyAccount

Alternatively you can make an account application over the phone or by email. If you are making an application for electricity on behalf of someone else, you will need to provide us with their consent, before we can accept the request.

Please visit **synergy.net.au/forms** to download a consent form.

# Things you should know

#### The billing cycle

Typically, we'll send you a bill once every 2 months.

#### **Meter access**

Western Power needs access to the meter on your property at least once a year. If you are located outside a meter reading area, Western Power may send you a self-read card. For more information contact Western Power's customer service team on 13 10 87.

#### **Estimated bills**

If a meter cannot be read or a self-read card has not been received, Western Power will provide us with an estimate of your electricity consumption, which will be used to bill you. There will be a notification on your bill if the meter reading has been estimated.

#### The bill amount

Your bill is calculated based on a reading taken from the meter at your premises (unless an estimate is required). The reading shows how much energy you have used.

#### **Special meters**

You might need a meter with special capabilities, for example, if you've got a time-of-use tariff or you have a renewable energy system. If you do not have the correct meter you will be in breach of your Synergy contract, so ask us if you're not sure.

#### **Electrical emergencies**

If there are fallen power lines, or if you have any concerns for your safety, keep a safe distance and call Western Power's 24-hour emergency and fault line on **13 13 51**.

#### Your privacy

We keep your personal details protected. We'll only share your information with third parties that are necessary, and if they form part of our product/service delivery such as billers, network operators and financial institutions.

See **synergy.net.au/privacy** for more information.

#### Safety

Sometimes a faulty connection or a dodgy appliance can result in the loss of power to your premises. An indicator could be:

- A fuse at your premises is failing repeatedly; or
- A circuit breaker or safety switch is 'tripping off' the power.

If you receive an electrical shock from your taps, including 'tingles', this may indicate a faulty connection and you should call Western Power straight away on **13 13 51**, and seek medical advice.

For more information visit synergy.net.au/safety



We may supply your energy but what we're really here for is to help you get the most out of it. That means giving you the best possible service. If you have any feedback or ways we can help you better, we'd love to hear them.

#### Visit us online at synergy.net.au/contact

#### Give us a call:

- 13 13 53 for residential customers.
   Monday to Friday between 7am and 7pm AWST, excluding public holidays.
- 13 13 54 for business customers.
   Monday to Friday between 8am and 5pm AWST, excluding public holidays.
- +61 8 6212 2222 for calls outside Western Australia.
   Monday to Friday between 7am and 7pm AWST, excluding public holidays.
- TTY **13 36 77**if you have hearing or speech difficulties.
- TIS **13 14 50** for telephone interpretation services.

#### Or you can write to us:

Customer Services
 Synergy
 GPO Box K851
 Perth WA 6842