



15 May 2025

Kia ora Kate,

Thank you for meeting our head of customer services Bryan Middleton and myself, customer wellbeing manager Lizzie Governor, to discuss Contact Energy's efforts to work with customers on solutions to energy hardship.

This is a matter that we work hard on, and in the past few years we have taken significant steps to address, and support, customers in need.

As you know, in response to Common Grace's challenge, we, last year, removed non-payment fees. Contact Energy does not charge disconnection or reconnection fees in cases of non-payment, and we have removed late payment and debt management fees.

At Contact we would love to see other energy retailers follow suit and help reduce fees that place unnecessary additional burden on households.

Last year I was appointed the energy sector's first customer wellbeing manager and with a team of 28 specialists we work every day help target support where it is needed most. We have a suite of options and partnerships where we offer help and solutions.

Our approach is to work with customers directly. Our door is always open, and we encourage customers to talk to our team. We are here to help.

In response to your questions for the *NZ Herald* series, I attach a copy of our responses for your information.

Thank you again for meeting with our team, and for writing to our CEO Mike Fuge.

Ngā mihi nui,

Lizzie Governor

**Customer Wellbeing Manager**

cc. Andrew Laxon, NZ Herald

Contact Energy Limited Level 2 Harbour City Tower, 29 Brandon Street, Wellington 6011 | PO Box 10742,  
Wellington 6143

P: +64 4 499 4001 | W: [contactenergy.co.nz](https://www.contactenergy.co.nz)

## **Common Grace and NZ Herald Energy Series**

### Contact Energy

**Q: Will you check that all your customers are on the cheapest plan that you offer for their energy use, and inform customers of any plans that would be cheaper for them? We are asking whether you will take this step for all customers, not just those in energy hardship. This could be done by comparing their past energy use against your current plans. If you offer bundled services, we do not believe that should be a barrier to you informing customers of the cheapest plan for their electricity use. You can still inform customers of plans that would be cheaper for them if they took on (or stopped taking) a bundled service, and/or inform them of other cheaper bundles that you offer.**

- Our approach is to work with customers directly, and we always encourage customers to get in touch to check if they are on the right plan
- To compare past energy use against current plans is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Circumstances can change such as change of address, a new baby, new job, less members of a household, or more members of a household
- We do offer time of use plans, such as Good Nights with free power from 9pm to midnight or Good Weekends with free power on Saturday and Sunday from 9am to 5pm. So far, we have delivered more than 215 million hours of free power to New Zealand households since 2021
- We also have Fourth Trimester, which supports families with newborns by giving them free energy for the first three months of baby's life. Since launch, the average saving is \$850
- Contact Energy offers the same electricity rates for customers outside of bundles, and those that have bundled broadband or mobile services.

**Will you stop charging (and threatening to charge) disconnection or reconnection fees in cases of non-payment? Yes / No If not, why not?**

- Contact Energy does not charge disconnection or reconnection fees in cases of non-payment.
- We have also removed late payment and debt management fees, ensuring there are no unnecessary financial barriers for customers to reconnect
- Disconnections have dropped 55 per cent this calendar year.
- At Contact we would love to see other energy retailers follow suit, as these fees place unnecessary additional burden on households.

**3. Will you provide discounted electricity to people in hardship, for instance by not passing on price rises to this group, capping their bills or by giving free power? (Please disregard the Power Credits scheme in your answer; we are looking for additional steps.) If yes, please provide detail of the scale of this type Yes / No If not, why not? Of assistance. Please provide projections for 1 June – 31 August 2025 or actual figures from 2024. ● What is the total sum of savings that customers in hardship are receiving because of your discounting initiative? ● How many households will benefit?**

- We have a suite of targeted support initiatives for people in genuine hardship
- Contact's approach is to work with customers directly
- We have appointed the energy sector's first Energy Wellbeing Manager with a 28-strong specialist team
- We also have more than 200 customer service representatives based in Levin, Dunedin and Wellington, many of whom are multi-lingual. We also have our Hello Co service to enable the translation with a live interpreter on the line of 250 languages. This helps us support customers where English is not their first language
- Our HandUp programme works directly with customers in need. This programme supports customers with bespoke payment options and discounted energy
- For customers in material hardship with outstanding balances we offer interest-free long term payment arrangements so they can reduce their debt overtime while ensuring they have power
- We have our Time of Use plans offering free power with Good Nights 9pm to midnight on weekdays, and Good Weekends free power on Saturday and Sunday 9am to 5pm
- We have a long-standing partnership with Women's Refuge providing free energy and broadband to all refuges and safe houses nationwide so women and children at their most vulnerable are warm and connected
- We also partner with community group Good Shepherd to reach women and families in vulnerable situations
- We partner with the Middlemore Foundation, AWHI and MSD to connect directly with families dealing with respiratory illness. We provide free power for winter ensuring families at home stay warm, healthy and supported while their child is recuperating.

**4. Will you be transparent about whether your door is open to serving people in hardship, by telling us how many customers you turned away in 2024 due to credit score or concerns about credit worthiness? If you referred customers to a different brand that your company owns, or to a social retailer, please count those customers among people that you are declining to take on. If you offered some**

**customers only prepay plans, please tell us how many you declined from post-pay plans but still offered prepay. Yes / No If not, why not?**

- Contact's approach is to work with customers directly
- Our door is always open, and we encourage customers to talk to us
- We have appointed the energy sector's first Customer Wellbeing Manager, and with a team of 28 specialists help target support where it is needed most
- In the past year, we have conducted 89,000 credit checks. Ninety four percent of customers joining Contact Energy
- We also work with customers in financial difficulty with discounted energy pricing with our bespoke HandUp programme
- Pre-Pay plans carry no additional costs and work on the same pricing as post pay, no fees, no disconnection nor reconnection costs
- Through our long-standing partnership with Women's Refuge, we have focused on supporting women impacted by financial abuse. We have removed the poor credit rating barrier enabling women to get connected with energy and broadband, and we offer support for the first few months with our Hand Up programme. To date 25 survivors have benefited.

**5. Are you taking any other initiatives to prevent hardship in winter 2025 that you want to tell us about**

- We have a community-first approach as a differentiator, building face to face relationships where people need help
  - Proactive community outreach at community and social agency events such as Age Concern, Age on the Go, community events, libraries and local markets throughout NZ
  - In the last six months we have had 420 face-to-face meetings and carried out simple financial health checks resulting in 120 customers helped move to the on the best plan for their circumstances.