



## Family Violence Policy

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Effective Date: 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023

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## 1. Purpose

Family violence is a serious issue that poses substantial risk to the health and wellbeing of our communities. CovaU, as an essential service provider, has the proactive approach to support our customers experiencing family violence. The purpose of this policy is to outline our commitment to providing supportive assistance to vulnerable customers affected by family violence and how we meet our responsibilities to safeguard their safety and wellbeing.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all CovaU customers who may be experiencing family violence, regardless of their background, gender, religion, culture or age.

## 3. Definition of Family Violence

Family violence can include (but is not limited to) the following behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person that is/may be:

- (i) physically or sexually abusive; or
- (ii) emotionally or psychologically abusive; or
- (iii) economically abusive; or
- (iv) threatening; or
- (v) coercive; or
- (vi) in any other way controlling or dominating towards the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person; or
- (vii) behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, behaviour referred to above.

## 4. Our Commitment

CovaU is committed to being an exceptional energy retailer that puts customers first and benefits the community. We treat customers respectfully and with empathy. Once we identified or customers identified by themselves or notified to CovaU by an independent financial counsellor or social worker, as someone who is, or may be, affected by family violence, we will actively provide safe, supportive and flexible assistance for customer experiencing family violence in managing their personal and financial security.

### 4.1 Customer Services

Our customer-facing staff are specifically trained to recognise customers who may be experiencing family violence and respond with respect and sensitivity. We understand it can be traumatising for

customers to disclose their story of family violence to our customer service representatives. When we first recognise a customer experiencing family violence, we will flag the account with an alert to identify the affected customer and records of the conversation will be documented allowing for an effective engagement with the customer. A customer will be able to access our family violence assistance options without having to repeat their family violence experience every time they contact us.

To ensure our customers are safe and not to add any stress to their complex circumstances, we will not require proof of family violence. We will take customers at their word and work towards supporting them in a timely manner.

## 4.2 Account Security and Privacy

CovaU takes customer's safety and privacy seriously. All customers' personal information is confidential and will be protected in line with our Privacy Policy. Customer has the right to have their information stored securely and confidentially and to determine in what circumstances this data can be accessed. We have adopted processes to ensure that:

- our staff do not disclose or provide access to confidential information about an affected customer to any other person without the consent of the affected customer;
- we take steps to confirm that the affected customer's preferred method of communication is utilised.

For the joint account, our trained staff will take extra care to protect the information of the affected customers. The affected customer can set up a password for access to the account information if they wish to, so as to keep their personal details secured. With the consent of the affected customer, we can have a separate account to be set up in their sole name from the date the abusive partner has left the property or establish a new account for a new property ensuring the security and safeguard of this account.

## 4.3 Debt Management

CovaU recognises family violence is a potential cause of or result of payment difficulty. There are a range of payment assistance options to help make it easier for customers to pay the arrears. We will work together with our customer to find out the most suitable solution for their individual situation and won't restrict their energy supply. The full version of Victorian Hardship Policy and options of payment assistance is available online at <https://www.covau.com.au/terms/hardship>

We understand the debt of joint account can be more complex. We will assess the joint debt and financial responsibility for the energy services case by case before we take actions to recover the arrears. We will not commence or continue with proceedings for the recovery of debts from a residential customer who is engaged with us under the Victorian Hardship Policy and this policy.

## 5. Referrals and External Support

It is now widely recognised that the Government, corporate and community sector all have a responsibility to work together against family violence and provide support to the victims. CovaU will offer information and support to the affected customers, and refer them to external family violence support service providers where appropriate.

Some of the external support and resources include:

Organisation	Introduction	Contact number/ email	Website
<b>Government</b>			
<b>Police (24/7)</b>	For emergency and immediate danger	000	N/A
<b>Department of Human Services</b>	Social worker counselling service, Medicare, concessions, child support service etc.	Social Work Services: 132 850 Multilingual: 131 202	<a href="http://www.humanservices.gov.au">www.humanservices.gov.au</a>
<b>Counselling</b>			
<b>1800 RESPECT (24/7)</b>	National counselling helpline, supporting people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse	1800 737 732	<a href="https://www.1800respect.org.au">https://www.1800respect.org.au</a>
<b>Safe Steps (24/7)</b>	Empower women, young people and children experiencing family violence and secure their safety	1800 015 188	<a href="https://www.safesteps.org.au">https://www.safesteps.org.au</a>
<b>No to Violence (business hours)</b>	Working with men to end family violence by providing telephone counselling, information and referrals	1300 766 491	<a href="https://www.ntv.org.au">https://www.ntv.org.au</a>

<b>QLife</b>	LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral for people to about sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships.	1800 184 527	<a href="https://qlife.org.au/">https://qlife.org.au/</a>
<b>Legal Advices</b>			
<b>National Association of Community Legal Centres</b>	A non-profit community organisation that provides legal and related services to the public, focusing on the disadvantaged and people with special needs.	02 9264 9595	<a href="http://www.naccl.org.au">http://www.naccl.org.au</a>
<b>Women's Legal Services Australia</b>	A national network of community legal centres provides advice and information to women on particularly family law and family violence matters.	<a href="mailto:info@wlsa.org.au">info@wlsa.org.au</a> .	<a href="http://www.wlsa.org.au">http://www.wlsa.org.au</a>
<b>Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Service</b>	Supporting Aboriginal people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence, e.g. providing legal advices	1800 105 303	<a href="https://djirra.org.au">https://djirra.org.au</a>
<b>Financial</b>			
<b>National Debt Helpline (business hours)</b>	A not-for-profit service that helps people tackle their debt problems	1800 007 007	<a href="http://ndh.org.au">http://ndh.org.au</a>

## 6. Complaints

If a customer is affected by family violence and has a complaint in relation to their account, we will resolve the matters upon their first point of contact in accordance with our Complaints and Dispute Resolution Procedure available at CovaU's website <https://covau.com.au/contact/>

To make a complaint, customers can phone 1300 689 866. Customers who are unhappy with the outcome of their complaint can contact the relevant state Energy Ombudsman which is an independent,

free service.

- **Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria:** Tel- 1800 500 509 ; web- [www.ewov.com.au](http://www.ewov.com.au)
- **Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW:** Tel- 1800 246 545 ; web- [www.ewon.com.au](http://www.ewon.com.au)

## 7. Privacy

CovaU is committed to respecting the privacy and protecting the personal information of our customers in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and the National Privacy Principles.

Full details of CovaU's Privacy Policy can be accessed at [www.covau.com.au](http://www.covau.com.au)

## 8. Contact Details

### 8.1 CovaU Pty Ltd

We are always here to help. If you have any questions about this policy or may be affected by family violence, please contact us:

- By phone: 1300 689 866
- By email: [support@covau.com.au](mailto:support@covau.com.au)
- By live chat: [www.covau.com.au](http://www.covau.com.au)
- By post: PO Box R241, Royal Exchange, NSW 1225

### 8.2 Interpreter Service

If you need the phone interpreting service, please call 131 450 or visit

<https://www.tisnational.gov.au/Agencies/Help-using-TIS-National-services/Telephone-interpreting>

### 8.3 National Relay Service

- TTY: 133 677
- Speak & Listen: 1300 555 727
- SMS: 0423 677 767