



## Don Harwin

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council  
Minister for Resources  
Minister for Energy and Utilities  
Minister for the Arts

### MEDIA RELEASE

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#### **MORE HELP FOR VULNERABLE ENERGY CUSTOMERS**

Vulnerable energy customers in NSW have more access to help pay their bills with 342 community welfare organisations now able to issue \$50 emergency vouchers.

The NSW Government has added 30 organisations to its Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) Scheme to support those struggling to pay electricity or gas bills.

Energy and Utilities Minister Don Harwin today welcomed the new welfare groups and said their involvement will boost assistance for people that need it most.

“Our Government helped more than 55,000 vulnerable customers pay their energy bills through the EAPA scheme alone last year,” Mr Harwin said.

“Close to \$12 million in vouchers were issued through community welfare organisations in 2015/16 and with more now on board, including Western Sydney branches of Anglicare and Wesley Mission, we can help more people in need.”

Mr Harwin said the scheme provides emergency financial assistance to customers at risk of disconnection from essential services. “EAPA helps people experiencing short term financial crisis or a disaster pay their electricity or natural gas bill, ensuring they stay connected during periods of financial difficulty,” Mr Harwin said.

Minister for Western Sydney and Member for Penrith Stuart Ayres revealed the scheme will soon be online, which will provide quicker help to customers in crisis.

“This year’s accreditation process was brought forward so new welfare organisations can be included in the July 1 transition to digital EAPA vouchers. Vouchers will be processed quicker and this means faster relief for customers,” Mr Ayres said.

“Each voucher has a value of \$50 and is issued to eligible customers by welfare organisations throughout the state, including many new ones in Western Sydney. Energy retailers are required to accept vouchers as credit towards a customer’s bill.”

Anglicare CEO Grant Millard said Government rebate programs make a difference.

“EAPA is one of many NSW Government rebates our clients assess. EAPA vouchers help older people afford extra heating and air con, reconnect people’s disconnected gas and electricity and helps people out of a downward debt spiral,” Mr Millard said.

For more information visit <http://www.resourcesandenergy.nsw.gov.au/energy-consumers/financial-assistance/stay-connected-through-financial-crisis>.

**MEDIA: Mitch Compton | Minister Harwin | 0466 514 010  
Anna Hindson | Minister Ayres | 0437 094 873**