FINANCIAL INCLUSION ACTION PLAN



origin

FIAP
Financial Inclusion Action Plan

GETTING IT RIGHT FOR ALL



“Our first Financial Inclusion Action Plan is an important milestone for Origin”

A message from our CEO Frank Calabria

According to a recent report by KPMG[1], nearly 2 million Australian families are under financial stress, struggling to pay their bills and meet everyday expenses. Businesses have a vital role to play in providing support and assistance to these families and ensuring no Australian is left behind.

With 4.2 million customers, Origin is very aware of the pressures many Australians face. Every day we speak with people from all walks of life who are increasingly overwhelmed by concerns about low wages growth and mounting cost of living pressures.

For nearly 15 years, Origin’s Power On program has provided support to customers in hardship and a pathway to managing their ongoing energy costs. We’re proud of our work through Power On, which included freezing the July 2017 price rises for those in the program, building new partnerships with a range of support agencies and hosting regional community forums to provide advice and assistance to any person struggling with their power bills.

But there is clearly more that can be done to ensure that the most financially vulnerable parts of our community receive the support they need to achieve financial independence, not just to pay their energy bills, but across all aspects of their lives.

All Australians should be able to access energy, an essential service not just for our economy, but for our society, and we are empowering our teams to make sure this happens.

We will continue to review how we operate and the impact we have on our customers. We will continually strive to give our people the tools they need to identify customers who might be vulnerable, and to truly understand their circumstances and how we can best help.

Our first Financial Inclusion Action Plan is an important milestone for Origin and will continue to evolve so we can improve our efforts to help those most in need.

Central to all of this is the work we are doing with Good Shepherd Microfinance and the FIAP Partnership Group and 30 other Australian community groups and businesses which are a part of the FIAP program.

This coalition gives us a foundation to continue to work to ease the burden on vulnerable Australians with the help of governments, consumer advocates, regulators and many others, breaking down barriers to access support and helping the most disadvantaged groups in our community to get back on their feet again.

It is just part of Origin’s commitment to do more to create opportunities and contribute to a better future for all Australians.



Frank Calabria
CEO, Origin

1. KPMG Financial Stress in Australian Households, April 2017

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WHO WE ARE
AND WHAT WE DO

Our story started back in 2000 and we've grown to become Australia's leading integrated energy company with more than 4.2 million customers and interests in generation and gas exploration and production.



Our customers

Energy is essential to everyone. We never forget that our customers rely on us to provide them with affordable, reliable and sustainable energy to power their homes and businesses.

We're focused on helping customers manage their energy use and costs by providing energy saving advice; simplifying communication for customers and making sure offers are transparent and can be easily compared. Protecting people in financial hardship continues to be a priority along with delivering a genuine and lasting reduction in energy prices through a whole-of-industry response and increasing the supply of low-cost renewables.



Our people

Our people underpin everything we do at Origin. Our focus is on creating a rewarding workplace where everyone's contribution is valued and we look out for each other's safety, health and wellbeing.

This includes flexible work options to support people achieve a good work-life balance, our Employee Assistance Program and promoting gender equality outcomes for men and women and indigenous employment opportunities.



Our community

Contributing to a better society is crucial. We care about our impact and respect the rights and interests of the communities in which we operate, by listening to them, understanding and managing the environmental, economic and social impacts of our activities.

This includes supporting regional communities and stimulating the local economy through the Live Local and Regional Buy programs while the Origin Foundation is focused on creating better lives for young Australians by supporting good causes in education and increasing indigenous participation in the workforce.

Our FIAP working group

We would like to acknowledge the support, expertise and guidance of Good Shepherd Microfinance in the development of our first foundation Financial Inclusion Action Plan.

We're a diverse energy business with a significant reach across customers, staff and communities – from the support we provide to customers in hardship, to our approach to the communities we operate in, to how we support the economic development of Indigenous communities through our Reconciliation Action Plan. To this end, our plan has been developed in consultation with wide representation across our business.

Everyone at Origin plays a role in the success of our FIAP - whether it be through education and awareness, to delivering new policies and through the conversations and interactions we have with customers every day.

Our FIAP Working Group and Steering Committee will provide the governance and commitment to driving our stated actions.

FIAP Working Group	FIAP Steering Committee
Kirsten Henshaw, Head of Product Delivery	Jonathan Briskin, Executive General Manager, Retail
Gill McGregor, Program Lead, Advocacy Programs	Andrea Linsenmeier, Manager, Customer Payment Solutions
Stuart Osbourne, Media Manager	Jan Prichard, General Manager, Customer Care
Chris Rice, Product Portfolio Manager	Donna Pidduck, Chief Marketing Officer
Anthony McDonald, Head of People & Culture Consultants	
Madara De Silva, Operations Analyst	

Financial inclusion is the ability to access core financial products and services that are affordable.

Financial resilience is the ability to access and draw on your resources and capabilities, and any external resources and support that can be accessed in times of financial adversity. Our working group is focused on both in this action plan.

Our focus areas

To develop and deliver our action plan, we've focused on four key areas - Relationships, Impact, Learning and Reporting.



RELATIONSHIPS

Our commitment to the Financial Inclusion Action Plan gives us the opportunity to further build our relationships and collaboration with the community, other businesses, customer advocates and government to collectively make a difference in improving financial inclusion and resilience.



IMPACT

We will engage and listen to customers, staff, and communities to better understand their needs to co-create and solve problems together.



LEARNING

We seek to learn as we develop and deliver our Financial Inclusion Action Plan and share our learnings with the FIAP Community of Partners.



REPORTING

We will measure and report on the outcomes of our actions – to ensure we are delivering on our commitment to improve financial inclusion and resilience for customers, staff and communities.

HOW WE LOOK AFTER OUR **CUSTOMERS IN FINANCIAL HARDSHIP**

What is financial hardship and who's eligible to receive help?

When we talk about hardship, we mean customers who are suffering from financial difficulty – customers who would like to pay their energy bills, but really can't manage to do so. There's no limit, no asset testing and no income testing. It's someone, who at some point in their life, can't afford to pay for the energy they've consumed.

When a customer calls us to tell us they're in financial hardship they've taken the first big step. Our approach is to actively listen to understand their circumstances and then tailor our assistance to them.

We not only provide support while the customer is experiencing hardship, we take a holistic approach to identify customers early, and provide care until they can manage their energy costs.



Meet Andrea Linsenmeier, our Manager, Customer Payment Solutions who looks after hardship programs for our customers.

Early identification

We use a statistical predictive modelling system to help assess the likelihood of a customer experiencing payment difficulties within the next six months. It incorporates a demographic analysis of our customer base along with customer behaviour analysis, including payment frequency and amounts, whether payments are made in full and on time, whether there have been requests for extension, account concession information, the account balance and cancelled payment plans.

One of our programs is Power On. It helps customers get back on track.

Everyday expenses can sometimes get on top of customers and they can fall behind. Power On allows customers who are struggling, more time, more support and more information to pay their bill, so they can keep their power on and move forward to a sustainable outcome.

While on the Power On program customers are protected from any collection activity, including disconnection. No further fees are applied (e.g. late payment fees, credit card fees). We stay in contact with our hardship customers to ensure the support we're providing is still best for them, as we understand situations can change.

Payment options vary from extension of debt repayments up to 24 months, to payment matching and for our most vulnerable customers parking their debt and providing a subsidy for ongoing consumption.

Our Power On program has been helping customers since 2003 with personalised case management support.

Origin's investment in hardship programs

This year, we're investing around $15 million to help customers get back on track.

In FY17 we provided $12.4m in matched payments and waivers to support our most vulnerable customers get back on track.

In addition, we have a national energy efficiency program where we partner with trusted and respected community groups to do free phone or in home sessions to build literacy of energy costs. As a part of this program, we also provide retrofit items and in some circumstances, appliance replacement.

As part of our ongoing support to our vulnerable customers in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and the ACT, we froze the impact of 2017 energy price rises.

Then there's the investment in being part of educating indigenous communities and now the investment into our Financial Inclusion Action Plan. It's an ongoing investment, not just about helping the customer today, but helping the customer tomorrow.

Around 42,000 customers are currently on our hardship program. Success is that they move through the program - even if they have a bump in the road.



CASE STUDY:

What kinds of customers has our Power On program helped?

One of them is a gentleman in Queensland. He was an Origin customer but was struggling with his power bills. He had a disability and needed carers to live with him, and the carers were using a large amount of power. He didn't want them to stop using the power, because he didn't want them to stop caring for him.

He worked with us over three years. He paid us what he could afford to pay us. We helped him by providing additional services, energy efficiency advice, we did some gardening for him so they could access his clothes line. And now he's one of our loyal customers. He pays on time, every time. If he's having trouble he calls us to help him.

So it's not just a 'help and leave and push them away'. It's a continuous process that they know that there's safety. When they get stuck, they trust us and they come back and we can help them if something else happens in their life.

Andrea Linsenmeier

> ***'I'm proud of the fact that we've got a program that's non-judgemental, understanding that sometimes people don't get it right the first time, so multiple opportunities and building that trust, not just with our customer base but with our community as well to say 'if you're stuck, call us because we can help'.***
>
> *Andrea Linsenmeier*

CASE STUDY



Stacey's story

My employer had suddenly ceased trading, leaving me unemployed with no payout for leave, unpaid superannuation, etc. The house I was renting was sold to someone who planned to move in, so I was evicted mid-lease and had to move into a much more expensive rental property (thanks to the mining boom doubling rents in my town). The father of my children stopped paying any child support.

I managed to get some part-time work but was still struggling to pay rent, feed my children, and pay my bills. I went hungry, but could just afford to pay the rent and feed my kids, but couldn't afford anything else.

I rang Origin in tears. I was transferred to your Hardship team and made contact with an angel. I can't remember her name, but she was understanding, and caring, and made me a deal that gave me a glimmer of hope. I could make small payments, and when I was earning a decent wage again, if I agreed to pay a certain amount regularly, Origin would match those payments, effectively halving my debt.

That was the light at the end of my dark tunnel. And I vowed to repay that debt as soon as possible.

Fast-forward a year or so, and I got a part-time temporary job. I loved being able to commit to repaying Origin for the $2,000 debt. Fast-forward another year or so, and I got a permanent job. Now I'm about $800 in credit with Origin, because of the direct debit that comes out every fortnight. At every opportunity, I tell people how Origin helped to support me when I was at my lowest. It's the least I can do to repay your faith in me.

Stacey

ORIGIN'S FOUNDATION **FINANCIAL INCLUSION ACTION PLAN**

FIAP Action Area

There are four key areas of the Financial Inclusion Action Plan.

- Products and services
- Capabilities, attitudes and behaviours
- Awareness and understanding of culture and diversity
- Economic participation and status

The FIAP plan impacts our customers, staff and the community (our stakeholders) and as a quick visual reference to these groups you'll see the following FIAP symbols:

Customers	Staff	Community
		

Products and services

It's important that we have products and services that are accessible and relevant to customers at each stage of their journey and experience with us. And we support those who are most vulnerable to financial hardship.

Stakeholder	Action	Output	Outcome	Category	Responsibility	Timeframe
Customers	Review the entire customer lifecycle from the perspective of hardship customers.	Continuous improvement of customer service across all channels to better assist customers in hardship. Focus on increasing early identification of vulnerability and post hardship support.	Create a better understanding of the experience of customers in hardship and the impact of their interactions with Origin. Customers most in need continue to be provided with support to help them get back on track.	Continue	• Customer Payment Solutions	December 2018
Customers	Continue to improve awareness and understanding of low cost and discounted products and benefits.	Clearer communications to customers about benefits across all our product offerings making it easier to compare offers, understand the benefits of discounted products and what happens at the end of a benefit period.	Customers are supported to reduce and manage their energy costs through a greater understanding of product offerings.	Continue	• Marketing	Ongoing
Customers	Explore a new energy proposition specifically for customers on our hardship Power On program.	Develop and launch a specific energy proposition for customers in hardship that complements our existing hardship program (Power On) and provides customers with support to help them get back on track.	Customers have access to appropriate and affordable energy products and services.	Build	• Marketing • Customer Payment Solutions	June 2018
Customers	Review and continue to improve flexibility of payment options across Origin's entire product portfolio.	Report on recommendations to deliver consistent and flexible payment options across all product offerings including natural gas, electricity, LPG, solar, batteries and home products. Increase awareness of available payment relief programs (e.g. No Interest Loan Scheme).	Customers are supported to manage payments to suit their circumstances. Origin staff are provided with tools and training to help support customers.	Build	• Customer Payment Solutions	December 2018
Community	Better assist and support recently arrived communities to help ensure they are set up on sustainable and affordable energy plans.	Collaborate with government, social service providers and other FIAP Trailblazers, to review existing support services and ensure newly settled immigrants have the support required to set themselves up on a sustainable and manageable energy plan.	Australia's recently arrived communities are supported to gain financial security and independence. Consider availability of access to services such as energy audits and financial counselling.	Explore	• Customer Payment Solutions • FIAP Working Group	Ongoing



"A day's work would consist of supporting customers from start to finish. It's just a matter of finding the right solution for the right customer at the right time."

Alex, Advocacy Specialist, Customer Payment Solutions

Capability, attitudes and behaviour

It's important that our people get the right training and have a service attitude that makes our customers feel comfortable and listened to.

Stakeholder	Action	Output	Outcome	Category	Responsibility	Timeframe
Customers **Staff**	Build greater internal capability to support financial inclusion and resilience across the entire business.	To extend our hardship awareness programs across the entire business beyond our customer facing teams. Extend the content to include access to information and resources that support financial literacy and resilience of our own people, our customers and the community, with a focus on the heightened risk of financial exclusion for women.	All Origin employees: • understand financial vulnerability, its triggers and impact; • demonstrate empathy towards people experiencing financial hardship; • are empowered and supported to always act in the best interest of all customers including the most vulnerable members of the community; and • are aware and considerate of the impacts of gender inequity on financial inclusion.	Continue	• People and Culture • FIAP Working Group	December 2018
Staff	Support Origin employees through life events.	Review employee leave policies to support long term carers and emergency relief, and increase awareness through increased availability to specific and targeted information and resources.	Financial impairment is minimised during significant life events.	Build	• People and Culture	June 2018
Community	Review Origin's approach to customers in regional and remote communities.	Review and evaluate how we provide information, support and resources to regional and remote communities.	Customers in regional and remote communities are not negatively impacted by their geographical location.	Future	• Customer Payment Solutions	June 2018
Community **Customers** **Staff**	Continue to develop and contribute to the longevity and success of the FIAP Program.	Deliver, measure, and report of FIAP actions. Evolution and expansion of the FIAP working group.	Origin's commitment provides improved financial inclusion and resilience for vulnerable communities.	Future	• FIAP Working Group	Ongoing



"It's about having really genuine conversations with people. And as long as I can go home at the end of the day knowing I've helped at least one person out and provided them with the tools that they need then I'll be happy."

Rachael, Advocacy Specialist, Customer Payment Solutions

Awareness and understanding of culture and diversity

Our decision-making, policies and actions are inclusive and explain our initiatives to our staff, customers and the community. We appreciate our customers come from different cultures and backgrounds and experience life in many different ways and our focus is to connect, communicate and support.

Stakeholder	Action	Output	Outcome	Category	Responsibility	Timeframe
Customers **Community** **Staff**	Continue to increase awareness, availability and access to hardship support.	Continue to increase awareness of Origin's Hardship policy and available support. Continue to engage with stakeholders to better connect with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.	Supporting the community to improve financial inclusion.	Continue	• FIAP Working Group	Ongoing
Community **Staff**	Launch Origin's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2017.	Origin's second RAP continues to build equality of opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Continue to grow and evolve Origin's resourcing policies that improve ethnic and cultural diversity, including our Career Trackers program.	Continue to build knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions amongst Origin people. Formalise partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations.	Build	• Indigenous Relations	March 2018
Community	Review and evaluate disadvantage and financial exclusion in communities we operate in.	Informed recommendations for a framework on how Origin supports and contributes to a legacy of financial inclusion and resilience in communities.	Origin supports the economic development of the communities we operate in.	Future	• Integrated Gas and Generation	December 2018
Community	Include Origin's Financial Inclusion Action Plan in the broader framework of Origin's Sustainability Report	Financial exclusion and disadvantage is considered in Origin's approach to sustainability.	Greater transparency of financial exclusion and disadvantage leading to better informed decision making and more accessible and affordable energy for customers.	Future	• Sustainability Development	December 2018

Economic participation and status

It's important we support our customers and staff with policies and programs that help contribute to their economic success.

Stakeholder	Action	Output	Outcome	Category	Responsibility	Timeframe
Customers **Staff**	Review and assess how Origin can better support people experiencing family violence.	Develop specific policies, processes and capabilities to best support customers experiencing family violence. Continue to build awareness and provide ongoing access to services for staff experiencing family violence.	People experiencing or exiting family violence are provided with appropriate assistance and support to gain financial security and independence.	Build	• People and Culture • Customer Payment Solutions	June 2018
Customers	Continue to support business customers to help build economic success	Review support of small and medium enterprises for sustainable success with the rising cost of energy.	Small and medium enterprises are supported with products, services and payment arrangements to help manage increasing energy costs.	Future	• Solar and Emerging Business	June 2018

Reconciliation

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia; and we pay our respects to elder's past, present and future.

For some time, we've been working towards building employee cultural awareness; celebrating NAIDOC Week; scrutinising employment and procurement practises; piloting initiatives to enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation; and through our Foundation, create support programs that use education to help break the cycle of disadvantage and empower young Australians to reach their potential.

Building on the progress we've made, our Reconciliation Action Plan maps out our aspirations along four interconnected paths, both internal and external: A culture of respect; education, skills, jobs and careers; commerce and community development; and relationships.

We review our procurement policies and procedures to ensure barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our supply chain are able to be addressed. We consult existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers and partners on procurement strategies.

For our full Reconciliation Action Plan visit our website **originenergy.com.au**



"Commerce and community development bring opportunity, prosperity and an improved quality of life."

STATEMENT BY THE **FIAP PARTNERSHIP GROUP**

On behalf of the FIAP Partnership Group, I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Origin Energy for your ongoing public commitment to financial inclusion and financial resilience.

Together we are embarking on a journey to explore, learn and grow – both as a program through this Foundation FIAP and as Trailblazers undertaking the important process of reducing inequalities and promoting inclusive growth in our communities.

Financial hardship can impact us all, at any stage in our lives – through the FIAP, our hope is that every organisation will be able to respond in time and every time to ensure financial hardship can be identified early, managed and overcome. By building capacity, awareness and greater access to appropriate products and services, organisations will see the social and economic benefits in their engagement, outcomes and prosperity of customers and employees.

The FIAP Partnership Group exists to support the growing community of practice to identify opportunities to better respond to financial risks, develop meaningful actions across key stakeholders and measure the social and economic impact. Drawing on our individual expertise the FIAP Partnership Group will provide implementation, evaluation and quality assurance support to ensure key actions you have identified are (i) on track to achieve the intended impact and (ii) engaging those stakeholders in most need of support. We are proud to be on this important journey with Origin.

At the heart of the FIAP program is the belief that together we can achieve more. Origin joins the growing community of organisations that understand they play a critical role in Australia's financial future – together we can reduce inequalities and realise inclusive growth for all Australians.

Sincerely,



Vinita Godinho
General Manager, Advisory
Good Shepherd Microfinance
On behalf of the FIAP Partnership Group

FIAP
Financial Inclusion Action Plan

Supported by

Australian Government
Department of Social Services

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