

Checklist

The Card Surcharge Ban Survival Guide



What businesses need to know

From October 1, 2026, Australian businesses will not be allowed to add on card fee surcharges when customers pay with credit, debit or prepaid cards.

This change applies to Visa, Mastercard and eftpos. American Express has also chosen to prohibit surcharging from October 1.

Customers must see, and pay, one final price

Price transparency is the cornerstone of this reform. Under the new rules, both online and physical stores cannot add any surcharge, percentage, upcharge, or flat fee to card-based payments. Nor can businesses display a discounted 'cash' price, while charging more for cards.

Businesses must comply with the rules

The Card Surcharge Ban is one of the most wide-ranging updates to Australia's commercial landscape. It applies to all kinds of payment methods: online, offline, invoicing and mobile payments. There is no exemption for small businesses.

Surcharge changes may affect your margins

Adding on card surcharges is common practice for many businesses, online and off, so this change means a big shift in operations.

If you're currently surcharging, you will now be absorbing a fee that you've been recovering from customers for years. That's more money out of your pocket.

If you've never surcharged, you will still be paying a fee on every card transaction that quietly chips away at what you actually keep.

Either way, the fee is yours to carry. The ban just makes that more visible. The merchants who will feel it the least are the ones who are starting to shift away from costly card networks. And for many businesses, real-time payments are the logical alternative.

What your business should **do this week**

1. Review your merchant fees

From October 1, many businesses will need to absorb the card fees they were previously passing through to customers.

Look at your recent statements and determine:

- How much you currently pay in card-acceptance fees
- Whether you add on a 'card surcharge' to offset these fees
- How much the loss of a card surcharge offset will cost you in dollar terms

2. Compare online payment providers

Now is a good time to negotiate a better rate for your payment processing. One of the best ways to do this is by comparing the market, especially if you haven't reviewed your payment fees for 12+ months.

Banks and POS networks are often the default choice. However, many businesses are discovering that next-generation payment providers like Hello Clever can offer better value, with a lower total cost of ownership.

Figure 1 - Hello Clever example rates

	Hello Clever	Others
Australian cards from	1.2% + 25c	1.7% + 30c
International cards from	3.0% + 30c	3.5% + 30c
Real time payments from	0.4% + 70c	Not available
High volume pricing	IC++ available	Blended rates
Loyalty & Rewards	Included	Not available
Insights - Clever AI	Included	Not available

Quoted rates are examples only. Competitive data collected on 10 August 2026 based on Australian market information found on Stripe.com and Shopify.com. This is not financial advice.

3. Update your checkout and POS

The checkout and payment experience must be compliant with the new rules.

From October 1, 2026, businesses must not add-on or pass-through any card surcharges, nor imply that they are still in force. Failure to do so may be deemed misleading or deceptive conduct.

This means you'll need to remove:

- Surcharge signage from your shopfront and point of sale
- Checkout surcharges that are automatically added for Australian customers
- Automatic fees added to invoices, or via your accounting software

You should also prepare a short explanation of the change for customers and staff. It may be useful to publish this on your website and social media.

Many customers may be unaware of the Surcharge Ban, others will be quick to pull you up if they feel they are being unfairly charged.

4. Include PayID at checkout

Consumer payment preferences may change after October 1.

Some experts predict a resurgence in cash. Meanwhile, some major banks are removing points and bonuses from their rewards cards. Over time this may make cards a less attractive payment option.

For many businesses that are now obligated to absorb the card surcharge fees, offering alternative payment options is a way to reduce reliance on card payments, and costly card fees.

Why PayID for online businesses?

PayID has emerged as a popular option for online retailers that want to maximise their margins. Adding PayID has several benefits for merchants, which supports healthier cashflow:

- Lower transaction cost vs card networks (and therefore higher margin)
- Instant payout of funds (subject to PayID availability)
- No card chargeback issues
- No card-related fraud issues
- Automatic reconciliation

How to drive consumer adoption of PayID

Brands that are adding PayID for the first time can drive awareness and adoption by using Hello Clever's embedded Instant Cashback Rewards & Loyalty solution.

Instant Cashback is a proven method to increase PayID adoption and reduce payment costs.

[Learn more about PayID and real time payment methods.](#)

5. Offer instant Cashback & Rewards, not just discounts

Many high-growth retailers are moving now to promote PayID at checkout. However, the card surcharge rules prohibit businesses from displaying discounted prices for non-card options.

So how can you drive uptake of higher-margin payment options? One of the most effective strategies is running Instant Cashback and Rewards.

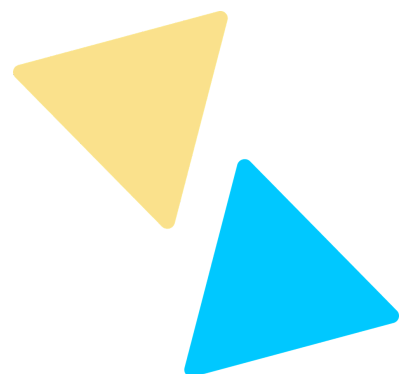
Success stories

Hello Clever merchants have reported exceptional results by combining PayID with Instant Cashback & Rewards:

- BatteryMate achieves **35%** conversion rate
- AMR Hair & Beauty sees **6000% increase** in orders during Black Friday
- Aftershock PC increased repeat purchase by **18.5%**

Cashback rewards are a proven tactic for driving online store growth. Moreover, they are compliant with the new surcharge ban rules and can help you navigate this change effectively.

[Learn more about Instant Cashback & Rewards for online retail.](#)



Next steps for business owners & finance teams

Start by comparing your current payment costs. Most online retailers set-and-forget their payment processing, so chances are, you could be saving money on every transaction.

The rules are changing, your payment rates should too

The card surcharge ban is the perfect reason to reimagine your payment strategy. Now is the time to compare your payment rates and seek out better value.

Modern payment options like PayID offer the potential for lower cost transactions, benefitting both merchants and customers, while reducing your reliance on costly card networks.

Get a free online quote

Get your business prepared today. If you're keen for a competitive and modern payment alternative, [request a quote from Hello Clever.](#)

