



Energy & Water  
Ombudsman NSW

# Help for small business customers



**We assist small businesses with a range of issues, including billing and contract issues and disputes about their energy retail classification.**

**When determining whether we are able to assist a business customer, we consider:**

- the number of staff employed and the annual turnover of the business
- the capacity of the organisation to seek redress without EWON's assistance
- whether the business consumes more or less than 100MWh electricity or 1000Gj gas per year.

## **Choosing an energy retailer and energy offer**

**The energy market is competitive and retailers want your business. Use this to your advantage and negotiate the best offer you can.**

If you buy electricity and gas from the standard retailer in your area and don't negotiate a market

offer, you may not get the best deal.

Ask the retailer for its best price or take up a market contract with any other retailer. A retailer may offer you a special deal or discount if you agree to switch to them.

Be aware of the status of your contract. If it has expired and you haven't renewed, you may be charged default rates that can be significantly higher than contract rates.

Shop around to find the offer that best suits your business and budget. Consider contract length, payment options and billing frequency as well as price. Compare offers by calling 1300 585 165 or visit [energymadeeasy.gov.au](http://energymadeeasy.gov.au).

Read the terms and conditions carefully. Make sure that the basis of any offer or discounts work for your business. Business customers can be required to pay a security deposit.

## **Information for tenants**

**Your business property lease should clearly specify who is responsible for paying the charges that make up energy and water accounts.**

Energy and water providers can only discuss an account with the account holder or an authorised representative. If you have a problem and are not authorised to discuss the account, the account holder will need to raise the issue with the retailer.

If you have a dispute about responsibility for charges or are unable to get assistance from the account holder to resolve the issue, contact us for advice.

## **Supply interruptions**

**Distributors must give four business days' notice of a planned supply interruption.**

It is your responsibility to arrange a generator if your business requires power during a planned supply interruption. You may also want to investigate back-up energy systems or insurance options to cover damage or losses caused by unscheduled supply interruptions.

Businesses can install surge protection devices on sensitive and/or business critical appliances to prevent damage in the case of supply events e.g. surges and outages.

## **Access to meters**

**If your meter is inside the premises and your business is closed when the meter reader visits, you may receive estimated bills.**

To avoid estimated bills, you may have to make an appointment to allow the meter reader entry and pay for a special meter read. See our estimated bills factsheet at [ewon.com.au/factsheets](http://ewon.com.au/factsheets).

# Saving energy and water

By making small changes you can reduce your energy and water use, save money on your bill and be kinder to the environment.

- ✓ Heating and cooling can account for around half of many businesses' energy bills. Increasing the temperature set point by just one degree in warmer months can save up to 10% in energy costs. It is also important your business maintains an effective thermostat for managing these systems' consumption.
- ✓ Energy efficient motors can deliver savings that offset their higher purchase price by reducing operating costs compared to standard motors. Servicing equipment regularly, ensuring adequate ventilation and using variable speed drives can reduce energy consumption.
- ✓ Switch off equipment and appliances when not in use - make use of timer settings to automate the process. Invest in high-star rated equipment and educate employees about energy efficiency.
- ✓ Reduce the work fridges do by turning off internal lights, maintaining seals and keeping fridges level. Keep fridges at least 60% full and freezers at least 75% full.

For more energy and water saving tips see our factsheet at [ewon.com.au/factsheets](http://ewon.com.au/factsheets).

## Having payment difficulties?

**Call your provider as soon as you can to discuss the situation.**

Retailer affordability programs do not extend to business customers. The earlier you contact your retailer, the more likely you are to get assistance. This may include more time to pay or a payment plan that allows you to pay your bill over time.

If you dispute a bill, pay an amount towards the account you consider reasonable while it is being investigated. This will help prevent large arrears accruing and shows good faith.

Business customers must ensure they are able to meet their regular ongoing business costs, which includes energy. Customers on large market contracts (more than 100MWh electricity or 1000Gj gas per year) do not have the same consumer protections that apply to customers who use less energy.

## Support for businesses

### Office of Environment and Heritage

There are small steps you can take to save energy in your business. You can also build a plan to reduce consumption and cut costs.

Your business may also be eligible for support through the NSW Energy Saver Program. The program provides technical support for energy efficiency projects, training workshops, technology guides and toolkits, sector specific resources and new ways to finance sustainable building upgrades. Visit [environment.nsw.gov.au/business](http://environment.nsw.gov.au/business).

### Energy affordability

The NSW Government offers rebates for upgrading equipment for small businesses. For more information visit [powertosave.nsw.gov.au](http://powertosave.nsw.gov.au).

### Smarter Choice

The Smarter Choice program at [environment.nsw.gov.au/households/appliances](http://environment.nsw.gov.au/households/appliances) has information about energy efficient appliances and their running costs. If your business runs fridges, air conditioning, dishwashers and other appliances, use the energy rating calculator on the website to compare running costs before you buy.

### Your Energy Savings

There are small steps you can start taking now to save energy in your business. Visit [youenergysavings.gov.au](http://youenergysavings.gov.au) to learn how to be more energy efficient and reduce waste within your business. You can also do an energy assessment of your business.

### NSW Small Business Commissioner

For general advice, call 1300 795 534 or email [we.assist@smallbusiness.nsw.gov.au](mailto:we.assist@smallbusiness.nsw.gov.au).

## Contact EWON

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| <b>Freecall</b>    | 1800 246 545<br>Mon - Fri, 9am - 5pm                               |
| <b>Freefax</b>     | 1800 812 291   |
| <b>Freepost</b>    | Reply Paid 86550<br>Sydney South NSW 1234                          |
| <b>Interpreter</b> | 131 450  |
| <b>TTY/Voice</b>   | 133 677  |
| <b>Email</b>       | <a href="mailto:complaints@ewon.com.au">complaints@ewon.com.au</a> |
| <b>Website</b>     | <a href="http://ewon.com.au">ewon.com.au</a>                       |
| <b>ABN:</b>        | 21 079 718 915   |

If you are calling from a mobile phone, let us know and we will call you back.