



Energy & Water
Ombudsman NSW

Backbilling



➤ If you want to check a backbill, you can request the records from your retailer. They must provide you with the previous two years worth of billing data.

There are rules about when a retailer can backbill, what advice they have to give to customers and when they have to give you time to pay.

What is a backbill?

A backbill is a bill that includes charges for consumption not included on past bills or not previously billed.

Backbills are also known as 'catch-up' bills.

Why have I been backbilled?

If you haven't been billed for all of the electricity or gas you used, your retailer can send a backbill. You may receive a backbill for one of the following reasons:

- your retailer may have had a problem with its billing process and was not able to issue you a bill on time
- your last bill, or last few bills, may have been estimated and the estimated usage was less than what you actually used
- there may have been an error in a previous bill
- your last bill may have been based on an incorrect meter reading
- there may have been a problem with the meter reading process.

Rules about backbilling

Retailers can send you a backbill to recover the amount undercharged for past energy used. However the retailer:

- cannot bill you for usage any further than nine months prior to the date you were advised of the undercharge where it was the fault of the retailer - even if that means some of your usage won't be billed
- cannot charge you interest on the amount being backbilled
- should explain why the amount is being backbilled and state the amount as a separate item on the bill
- must offer you time to pay the amount.

How much time do I get to pay the backbill?

You must be offered equal time to pay the backbill, up to a total of 12 months.

If the backbill is for six months, the retailer must give you six months to pay it.



When these rules don't apply

When the backbilling is not the retailer's fault, the backbilling restrictions don't apply. For example, if the meter can't be accessed because of a locked gate or dog in the yard and you receive a 'catch-up' bill after providing access, there is no limit on the length of time the retailer can backbill you for.

Supply contracts, the Electricity Supply Act and related energy Rules all state that it is a customer's responsibility to ensure there is access to the meter. If the meter reader cannot easily access the meter, any associated backbilling is the customer's responsibility provided the retailer informs the customer of the access problem.

The rules about backbilling are set out in the National Energy Retail Rules (Rule 30). You can get a copy of the Rules from the AEMC website.

www.aemc.gov.au/Energy-Rules/Retail-energy-rules/Current-rules

➤ If you are going to have trouble paying your bill, contact your retailer straight away. They can help arrange an affordable payment plan that allows you time to pay the backbill and stay on top of your ongoing usage.

➤ **Note:** the National Energy Retail Rules, including backbilling provisions, only apply to customers who use less than 100 MWh of electricity or 1,000 GJ of gas per annum.

Contact EWON

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

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