



Energy & Water  
Ombudsman NSW

# Changing retailers - what you should know



## Comparing energy retailers

**Energy retailers offer different prices and incentives to attract customers. By shopping around you may find the best deal for you.**

The Australian Government's independent price comparison service, Energy Made Easy compares all energy offers in NSW. Visit [energymadeeasy.gov.au](http://energymadeeasy.gov.au) or phone 1300 585 165.

There are commercial price comparison services available, but they may not offer you the cheapest or the best product available. If you use one of these services check their terms and conditions and compare their prices with those listed on Energy Made Easy. The same applies for energy brokers.

Some retailers sell both electricity and gas and some only sell electricity. You can sign with the same company for electricity and gas, or with two different companies.

You don't have to agree to a contract. Any retailer can offer you their standing offer contract. Check the standing offer prices on Energy Made Easy. If you haven't agreed to a contract, the retailer already supplying the property will usually bill you on standing offer prices.

## Check list - before you switch

- ✓ What are the usage and service availability charges?
- ✓ What is the contract length?
- ✓ How often will I get a bill?
- ✓ What are the payment terms and are others available?
- ✓ Can the rates increase during the contract period?
- ✓ What happens when my contract ends? Will I have to agree to a new contract or will this one be rolled over?
- ✓ Will my rates increase when my contract ends?
- ✓ What discounts are offered and what parts of the bill do these apply to?
  - Does the discount only apply to usage charges?
  - Does the discount only apply if I pay on time?
  - Does the discount apply if I don't pay the bill on time, but I'm on a payment plan?
- ✓ What fees are charged during my contract?
  - Is there an early termination fee if I change to another retailer?
  - Is there a fee if I move to another property?
  - Is there a fee to send my bill by mail?
  - Are there any administration fees on top of any network fees?\*

\*Your energy retailer can charge you fees passed on by your network distributor for work such as reading the meter when you move into a property, arranging to read the meter after an estimated read, or to disconnect or reconnect supply.

## Limits on early termination fees

**Most energy contracts include an early termination fee when customers cancel their contract before it expires. These fees must be disclosed at the time you agree to a contract.**

The law states that energy retailers have to waive the early termination fee if you:

- are on their hardship program
- received the Low Income Household Rebate or the Medical Energy Rebate at the time of the last bill
- have paid any part of the last bill with an Energy Account Payment Assistance (EAPA) voucher.

For some customers there is a limit on the amount an energy retailer can charge for cancelling a contract early. These limits apply to contracts entered into after 1 January 2014. The limits are:

- \$143.00 - when you cancel within the first 12 months
- \$49.50 - for the rest of the term of your contract.

## The transfer process

When you agree to a contract with a new retailer, they will send you a welcome pack or copy of your contract. This doesn't mean your account has been transferred. The transfer should happen after your meter is next read. This can take a few months, depending on the date of your last and next meter reads. When your account has transferred you should receive a final bill from your previous retailer.

Transfers can be delayed if there is a problem getting an actual meter read. If you think the transfer is taking too long, contact your new retailer and ask why.

➤ **Make sure you get a final bill from your previous retailer. If you do not pay the final bill, the debt may be referred to a debt collector or be listed as a default on your credit file.**

## Transfer errors

**Sometimes a customer's account can be transferred to another retailer, even if they haven't requested it.**

This may be because a different customer has provided the wrong information, or the retailer has recorded the information incorrectly, causing your account to be transferred by mistake.

You should contact your retailer if you receive:

1. A 'Final Bill' from your retailer when you haven't changed retailers
2. A letter from another retailer in someone else's name
3. A letter from a retailer addressed to the 'Customer' or 'Occupier'.

## Transfer and marketing disputes

If you have a complaint about the transfer of your account or an energy marketer, contact your retailer. Tell them your concerns and ask them to explain the situation.

## Contact us

We can give you advice about transfer and marketing issues. If you're not satisfied with the energy company's response, we can investigate your complaint.

## Marketing

**You may receive a telephone call or visit to your home by a marketer offering you an energy contract.**

If you don't want to talk to the marketer you can tell them you are not interested and end the conversation. If a marketer asks you to give them information from your bill or tells you they are from your current electricity retailer, you don't have to talk to them. You can contact your current retailer on the telephone number listed on your bill to check if they tried to contact you.

If you want to stop marketers from contacting you, you can:

- register your phone numbers on the Do Not Call Register by phone on 1300 792 958 or online at [donotcall.gov.au](http://donotcall.gov.au)
- display a 'No Marketing' sign or sticker at your property
- register your property on the 'No Contact Lists'. You can either contact a particular company individually, or go online to [donotknock.org.au/no-contact](http://donotknock.org.au/no-contact), which can put you on the No Contact list for every retailer operating in NSW.



## Contact EWON

<b>Freecall</b>	1800 246 545 Mon - Fri, 9am - 5pm
<b>Freefax</b>	1800 812 291
<b>Freepost</b>	Reply Paid 86550 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>

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

ABN: 21 079 718 915