

# Make an informed choice about energy contracts



Energy & Water  
Ombudsman NSW

## About energy marketing

In New South Wales you can choose who sells you electricity and gas. You may be contacted about an offer by a marketer from your existing energy company or a new company. They may contact you by phone or by mail, or a door-to-door marketer may visit your home.

## What do they offer?

Generally, these offers provide a special rate or deal if you agree to a contract.

If you agree to the energy offer, it becomes a contract between you and the company.

If you don't take up an offer, your account and billing will continue just as before with your existing company. Either way, the network company that supplies electricity or gas to your area remains the same.

## You don't have to agree

Whether you are doorknocked or contacted by phone, you don't have to sign or agree to anything. If you're interested in the offer, take your time and ask all the questions you need to about the terms and conditions of the contract. Ask someone you trust to look over the offer or call EWON for more information.

## Door-to-door or telephone marketers

Marketers selling energy contracts must abide by the Marketing Code of Conduct. They **must**:

- produce a photo identity card which states their full name and who they work for
- tell you the reason for their visit or phone call
- tell you about the ten day cooling-off period which allows you to cancel the contract if you change your mind
- explain any fees or charges, including early termination fees
- provide you with the written terms and conditions before asking you to sign a contract
- leave your home immediately or end the phone call when you ask them to.

They **must not**:

- engage in misleading or deceptive conduct
- contact you after 8.30pm on weekdays, or 7pm on weekends
- contact you again within 30 days of you saying you don't want a contract
- contact you again at all if you ask to be put on their 'not to be contacted' list



## Tips for resolving complaints

1. If you have any problems with your energy or water company, contact them first and explain your situation. Keep records of letters, names, times and dates.
2. If the call centre staff can't help you, ask to speak to a supervisor.
3. If the problem is not fixed, contact EWON by phone, fax, email, letter or visit [www.ewon.com.au](http://www.ewon.com.au) to make an online complaint.

## About EWON

The Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) provides an independent way of resolving customer complaints about all electricity and gas suppliers in New South Wales and some water suppliers. Our service is free, fair and independent. Our aim is to keep essential services within reach of everyone.

## Contact EWON

FREECALL	1800 246 545* Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm
FREEFAX	1800 812 291
FREEPOST	Reply Paid K1343 Haymarket NSW 1239
INTERPRETER	131 450
TTY/VOICE	133 677
EMAIL	<a href="mailto:omb@ewon.com.au">omb@ewon.com.au</a>
WEBSITE	<a href="http://www.ewon.com.au">www.ewon.com.au</a>

\*Calls from mobile phones may attract a fee, which will vary depending on your service provider. If you are calling from a mobile phone, let us know and EWON will call you back.

ABN: 21 079 718 915 Stock No: 1246–0608  
Last revised: June 2008

## True or false?

Beware of false and misleading information from door-to-door marketers such as:

"You must sign this to receive your pensioner rebate" **FALSE**

"Your usual company is going out of business and you need to sign with us or your power will be disconnected" **FALSE**

"I've been sent by the Government" **FALSE**

"You must show me your electricity and gas bills" **MISLEADING**

"Please sign here to indicate I've spoken to you" **MISLEADING**

"My company is just your current company by a different name" **FALSE**

"You have to sign now" **FALSE**



To avoid door-to-door marketers, clearly display a sign saying 'No Marketers'.

According to the Energy Marketing Code of Conduct, marketers must abide by these signs. If you have a sign displayed and the energy marketer visits your home, contact the company immediately or call EWON.

### **I'm thinking of signing a contract. What do I ask?**

**Billing:** Ask how often you will receive a bill as this can vary between companies (from once a month to once every six months).

**Payment:** Ask how they accept payment (eg do they offer direct debit, can you pay your bill at the post office).

**Fees and charges:** Some contracts may include a range of fixed charges (eg a special meter reading fee to start the contract or a monthly fee if you don't agree to pay by direct debit). Ask them to explain all the fees and charges.

**Early termination fees:** If you cancel a contract early, you may have to pay a fee. The fee must be specified in the terms and conditions, so make sure you ask about this before agreeing to a contract.

**Pensioner rebate:** Ask how the company applies your rebate (it may be quarterly, annually or every six months), as this may affect your finances. If you choose to enter into a contract, make sure the marketer applies the rebate to your account.

### **What if I change my mind?**

You have a ten day cooling-off period to cancel the contract without penalty. You can cancel the contract in writing or over the phone.

### **Marketing to others in your household**

If someone else in your household agrees to a contract, it may mean that your existing account will be closed.

If this happens without your consent, you or the person who agreed to the contract can ask for it to be cancelled.

If you have problems with this, you can call EWON for help.

### **Advocates, carers and power of attorney**

Even if you have responsibility for managing the affairs of another person, a marketer may set up a contract with that person if they consent. If you later contact the company and explain this and they decline to cancel the contract, you can call EWON for help.

### **Don't want to receive any more offers?**

You can contact the energy company and tell them not to contact you again. (You will however need to contact each energy company that makes you an offer.)

To avoid telemarketing calls you can ask to be put on the Do Not Call Register, phone 1300 792 958 or visit [www.donotcall.gov.au](http://www.donotcall.gov.au)

To avoid door-to-door marketers, clearly display a sign saying 'No Marketers'. According to the Energy Marketing Code of Conduct marketers must abide by such signs. If you have a sign displayed and the energy marketer visits your home, contact the company immediately or call EWON.