



Energy & Water  
Ombudsman NSW  
Free, fair and independent

# 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 about electricity network tariffs

If your business is moving to new premises, the offers available to you from electricity retailers will include the existing network tariff for the site. The network tariff is a charge for using the electricity network. The tariff usually consists of multiple separate charges, or components. These charges are set by the distributor and passed on to you by the retailer. The network tariff assigned to your premises is an important factor for calculating the total amount you will be asked to pay on your monthly or quarterly bills.

The network tariff is assigned based on the historical energy usage or the type of meter installed at the site. This means that if your business is moving to a new site, the network tariff will usually be based on the energy usage of the business that previously occupied the premises. If you are moving into a new development and requesting a new connection, you will be assigned a default tariff.

You can ask your retailer for information about the available network tariffs for your site. If you don't think the existing network tariff for your premises fits the energy profile of your business, you can ask your retailer for the tariff to be reviewed.

The three distributors in NSW all have different policies for assigning, reviewing and reassigning tariffs to business customers. The distributor may require your business to use energy at the site for 12-24 months before it will review the tariff.

## Information for tenants

Your business property lease should clearly specify who is responsible for paying 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 are unable to get assistance from the account holder, contact us for advice.



## 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).

### 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 unplanned supply interruptions.

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

### Having payment difficulties?

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

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. Retailer affordability programs do not extend to business customers.

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.

### 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).

### Support for businesses

#### Energy Saver

Your business may be eligible for support through the NSW Climate and Energy Action program. There are several grants, schemes and guides to help cut your energy consumption and minimise bills for your business, with sector specific resources and new ways to finance sustainable building upgrades. The NSW Government offers financial incentives to upgrade equipment via approved suppliers. For more information visit [energy.nsw.gov.au/business-and-industry](http://energy.nsw.gov.au/business-and-industry).

#### Energy Rating Calculator

The Energy Rating Calculator at [energyrating.gov.au/calculator](http://energyrating.gov.au/calculator) has information about energy efficient appliances and their running costs. If your business runs fridges, air conditioning, dishwashers and other appliances, use the calculator to compare running costs before you buy.

#### Energy efficiency

Visit [energy.gov.au](http://energy.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 visit [smallbusiness.nsw.gov.au](http://smallbusiness.nsw.gov.au).

### Make a complaint or enquiry

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|------------------|--|----------------------------|
| <b>Freecall</b>  | 1800 246 545*                                  | Mon - Fri, 9am - 5pm       |
| <b>Freepost</b>  | Reply Paid 86550                               | Sydney South NSW 1234      |
| <b>TTY/Voice</b> | 133 677  | <b>Interpreter</b> 131 450 |
| <b>Online</b>    | <a href="http://ewon.com.au">ewon.com.au</a>   |                            |
| <b>In person</b> | Level 11, 133 Castlereagh St, Sydney, NSW 2000 |                            |

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