Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW

Changing retailers

Comparing energy retailers

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

The Australian Government's independent price comparison service, Energy Made Easy compares all electricity and gas offers in NSW.

Visit the government site **energymadeeasy.gov.au** or phone 1300 585 165 to compare energy plans and get help to switch retailers.

There are commercial price comparison services and brokers available, but they may not offer you the cheapest or the best product available. If you use one of these services, check its terms and conditions and compare its prices with those listed on the government run site.

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

Types of offers

You must open an account with an energy retailer if you are using electricity or gas at your home. Most energy plans advertised by retailers are 'market offers' that are available to anyone within a set area.

Retailers may request your personal information to perform a credit check or to assess your payment history before opening the account. If you are having problems opening an electricity account because of your credit history, the retailer currently supplying the property must make you a 'standing offer' based on the default market offer price. If you haven't agreed to a contract, the retailer already supplying the property will automatically bill you based on the default market offer price.

Checklist: Before you switch

- ☐ What are the usage rates 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 a fee if I move to another property?
- ☐ Are there any membership fees?
- ☐ Have you compared the additional fees and charges (such as meter reading or for disconnecting and reconnecting) with other retailers?

The transfer process

When you agree to a contract with a new retailer, it will send you a welcome pack or copy of your contract, but this doesn't mean your account has been transferred. Your new retailer should discuss an expected transfer date with you. The transfer could happen within several business days if you have a smart meter, but the date options may be different if your meter needs to be manually read every quarter by a meter reader. For example, your new retailer may arrange for the transfer to happen based on an estimated meter read or a meter read that has already happened in the past few months.

Your new retailer must notify you of any delay if the transfer does not occur by the expected date. If you think the transfer is taking too long, contact your new retailer and ask why. If your transfer is significantly delayed, or cancelled, you will still need to pay the retailer that is billing your premises for the energy you have used.

When your account has transferred you should receive a final bill from your previous retailer. If you do not receive a final bill, contact your previous retailer and ask why. 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.

Changing retailers if you have a debt owing or an active payment plan

If you transfer your energy account to a new retailer, any active payment plan you had agreed to with your old retailer will be automatically cancelled. If you have arrears owing to your old retailer, you must contact the retailer to renegotiate the payment arrangement. The retailer is not always required to provide a payment plan on a closed account. You can contact EWON for assistance if you cannot negotiate a payment arrangement on a closed account.

Transfer errors

Sometimes a customer's account can be transferred to another retailer, even if they haven't requested it. This may be because another customer provided the wrong information, or the retailer recorded the information incorrectly, causing your account to be transferred by mistake.

You should contact your retailer if you receive: A 'Final Bill' from your retailer when you haven't changed retailers; a letter from another retailer in someone else's name; 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. If your account has been transferred in error, you can contact either your new or old retailer – both are required to help you resolve the problem.

Early termination fees are prohibited in NSW

Retailers are not allowed to charge early termination fees in NSW. Retailers can charge a fee for terminating a fixed term contract (or benefit period) if the fee relates to the retailer's cost for installing any of the following on your property:

- a solar photovoltaic system
- a battery storage system
- a smart meter
- any associated equipment.

Retailers can also recover a charge if you terminate an energy contract early that has a fixed benefit period if:

- the benefit in your contract is a fixed tariff or a fixed charge for energy usage
- the contract includes details of the amount of the charge or how it will be calculated
- the charge is a reasonable estimate of the costs the retailer will incur if the contract is terminated early.

Marketing

You may receive a telephone call or visit by a marketer offering you an energy contract, you don't need to give them any information. To stop marketers from contacting you:

- register your phone numbers on the Do Not Call Register by phone on 1300 792 958 or at **donotcall.gov.au**
- display a 'No Marketing' sign or sticker at your property, available from: **donotknock.consumeraction.org.au**
- ask your retailer to put you on their 'no contact' list.

Make a complaint or enquiry

Freecall	1800 246 545* Mon - Fri, 9am - 5pm
Freepost	Reply Paid 86550 Sydney South NSW 1234
Interpreter	131 450
TTY/Voice	133 677
Online	ewon.com.au
In person	By appointment only. World Square, 680 George St, Sydney, NSW 2000

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

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