



Energy & Water
Ombudsman NSW
Free, fair and independent

High energy bills

High Bills

High bills are one of the most common issues that we investigate. There are many factors that can contribute to your electricity or gas bill being higher than expected.

If you are going to have trouble paying your bill, contact your electricity or gas provider straight away. It can help you arrange a new payment due date or an affordable payment plan to avoid disconnection of your supply. You can also ask to participate in your provider's affordability program. You will need to pay part of what you owe and enough to cover your ongoing usage.



High bill factors

Does your high bill include previous amounts you haven't paid?

If you didn't receive a past bill, or you only paid part of it, your high bill may include an amount you still owe. If this has happened multiple times, the amount you owe will be building up. You should contact your provider to arrange a payment plan to pay it off. Your provider can also offer suggestions to help you manage your future bills.

Has the price changed?

The prices may have changed, because you accepted a new offer or there was a price increase. To check if this is the case, compare the rates on your current bill with previous bills, and look to see if your provider included a note with the bill about a change in prices.

If your meter was exchanged, you need to check your bills to find out if the tariff also changed. Your provider or EWON can assist you with this.

Is your bill estimated?

Your bill may be estimated or include an adjusted 'catch-up' amount from a past estimated bill. Estimated bills are usually based on the amount of electricity or gas you used in the past. This may be more or less than the amount you actually used. After your meter is next read, your bill will be adjusted for any usage above or below the estimate. Your provider can estimate your usage if it can't obtain a meter read, but you can provide a self-read to improve the accuracy of your bill. For more information, please refer to our factsheet **Estimated bills** available at ewon.com.au/factsheets.

What is a high bill?

A high bill is something out of the ordinary, taking into account what your previous bills were, the variations in your usage over the year and what you consider the amount your bills should be normally.



If your meter reading has been estimated this must be clearly stated on your bill.

Disputing a high bill

If you receive a unexpectedly high bill, contact your provider. Tell it your concerns and ask for an explanation of the charges on the bill. If your provider can't explain the bill to you straight away you can request it to do a full investigation. You can also contact us at any time for independent advice.

Use your bills to keep an eye on your average usage over time by comparing the average daily usage figures.

Not satisfied with the result?

Contact us and we can investigate the accuracy of the high bill. We can also assist you by:

- helping you negotiate a payment plan with your provider so you can pay the bill over time
- referring you to agencies that offer financial support such as Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA)
- providing you with information about how to reduce your bills.

EWON's high bill investigations

We investigate high bill complaints to find out if your provider has contributed in any way. While we investigate billing complaints, we can't independently confirm a customer's appliance / equipment use during the disputed billing period(s), and we may not be able to identify exactly why a disputed bill is higher than expected. Often it's only possible to identify what is not the cause.

What else can cause high bills?

Some appliances and equipment use more energy than others. How and when you use them can also increase your bills. Faulty equipment can also lead to higher bills. Common cases of high energy usage include:

- seasonal use of heating and cooling appliances such as an oil column heater, electric wall heater or fan heater, underfloor heating or an air conditioner
- using household appliances like clothes dryers and washing machines
- running old or faulty large appliances like a refrigerator that doesn't shut properly
- faulty hot water service or setting a high water temperature
- using a hot water booster or day/night switch a lot during the 'peak' period
- a faulty thermostat on your hot water service or heater
- a gas leak - check if your meter is still running when all appliances are turned off or if you smell gas
- having no blinds or curtains, poor insulation or drafts.

Is your usage still high?

You can use your meter to check if your usage has increased and now decreased, or increased and stayed high. To do this, follow the steps below:

1. Take a meter reading at a set time on a typical day for your household.
2. Take another reading at the same time the next day.
3. Calculate the difference between the two to determine the amount you used in the last 24 hours.
4. Compare this with the 'average daily use' figure on your high bill.

If the amount you used in that 24 hour period is lower than the average usage on your bill, the high bill may have been caused by an increase in your energy use for the period of the bill. However, if your readings and the usage on your bill are consistent, your usage is stable.

You can do the same test over a number of days, which may provide a better indication if your usage fluctuates daily. Simply divide the usage recorded between meter reads by the number of days to calculate average daily usage.

Have you used more gas than you usually do?

You should compare the bill you received for the same period last year to account for seasonal variations such as a greater use of heating in winter, or more air conditioning in summer. If your usage is higher now than it was for the same period the previous year, it may be because you've:

- been at home more often and used more electricity and/or gas
- used appliances more than usual
- had people staying with you
- purchased new equipment or appliances.

Make a complaint or enquiry

Freecall	1800 246 545* Mon - Fri, 9am - 5pm
Freefax	1800 812 291
Freepost	Reply Paid 86550 Sydney South NSW 1234
Interpreter	131 450
TTY/Voice	133 677
Online	ewon.com.au
In person	By appointment only 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.