

About energy bills

This fact sheet explains costs on your energy bill – where they come from and what they mean.

This information applies to customers who live in Queensland,¹ New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania² and the Australian Capital Territory.³

There is a list of frequently asked questions about energy bills available [here](#).

What do the charges I see on my energy bill mean?

The type of charges you see on your bill will depend on the company you purchase your electricity or gas from (your retailer), the type of meter you have and the plan that you are on. Other factors such as whether you have solar or are part of an embedded network can also impact how you are charged for energy.

Types of meters

There are basic meters and smart meters for electricity.

A **basic meter** (also called a legacy or accumulation meter) is an older style of meter that usually has an analogue display and requires a person to manually read it to know how much electricity you have used over a period of time. These meters are usually read every 3 months.

A **smart meter** is a new type of meter with a digital display that measures your electricity use every 5 minutes. A smart meter sends information about when and how much electricity you have used to the relevant metering party who sends it on to your retailer (the company you purchase energy from) on a frequent basis, usually once a day. You can find out more information about smart meters [here](#) on the AER website.

There is only one type of meter for gas. These meters are manually read, usually every 3 months.

Tariffs, fees and charges

Tariffs (usage charges)

Tariffs are the way you get charged for your energy.

Your usage charges are calculated by your retailer based on how much energy you use and the tariffs that apply to you under your energy plan.

¹ This fact sheet applies to customers in Metropolitan Queensland only and does not apply to customers in Regional Queensland which is serviced by Ergon Energy.

² For customers in Tasmania, this fact sheet applies to electricity only and not gas.

³ Customers who live in Victoria should review the Essential Services Commission of Victoria's [website](#).

For electricity this is usually calculated and shown on your bill in cents per kWh (kilowatt-hours) or c/kWh.

For gas, this is usually calculated and shown on your bill in cents per MJ (Megajoules) or c/MJ.

The tariffs and charges you pay for are listed on your bill, often in the 'Understand your bill' section. You can ask your retailer if you aren't sure.

We've included information on common types of electricity tariffs in the table below.

Type of tariff	What it means
Flat rate tariff Also sometimes called: single rate, standard rate or anytime rate	You are charged the same price per kWh (kilowatt-hour) regardless of the time of day that you use energy.
Time of use tariff* <i>*Only relevant to customers with a smart meter</i>	<p>You are charged different prices per kWh (kilowatt-hour) for electricity you use at different times of the day.</p> <p>Time of use tariffs generally divide the day into 2 (peak and off-peak) or 3 periods (peak, off-peak and shoulder):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Peak usage times are when demand from all consumers is generally higher. You are charged a higher price when you use electricity during peak usage times. 2. Off-peak usage times are when demand from all consumers is generally lower. You are charged a lower price when you use electricity during off-peak usage times. 3. Shoulder usage times are when demand from all consumers is a little less than during peak usage times, or there may be a high level of solar generation. Shoulder rates usually apply in-between peak and off-peak usage times. <p>Your retailer should list your peak, off-peak and shoulder (if applicable) usage times on your bill. Usage times may vary between retailers, so keep that in mind if you change retailers. You can ask your retailer if you aren't sure.</p>
Demand charge* <i>*Only relevant to customers with a smart meter</i>	<p>You may also be charged a demand charge on top of your usage charges. This may be added to a flat rate tariff or time of use tariff.</p> <p>Demand charges are based on the maximum amount of electricity you use during a specified demand period or over a specific demand threshold. Demand charges can take different forms, some common types include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anytime demand: The demand charge is determined by the maximum amount of electricity you use in a particular period set by your retailer (this is commonly a 30-minute period or a day) throughout the entire billing period. For example, your retailer may take the largest 30-minute period of demand measured in kilowatts and multiply that by the

Type of tariff	What it means
	<p>demand charge rate and the number of days in the billing period.</p> <p>2. Peak demand: The demand charge is determined by the maximum amount of electricity you use during peak periods only. For example, this could be between 5pm and 8pm daily.</p> <p>Demand charges vary between retailers and plans, and should be listed on your bill. You can ask your retailer if you aren't sure.</p>
Solar feed-in tariff (also called solar exports)	<p>This will only apply if you have solar panels. This is the price you receive from your retailer for the solar electricity you generate and don't use or store. This will usually appear as a credit on your bill. You can ask your retailer if you aren't sure.</p>

Fees and Charges

Most retailers charge a **daily supply fee** on top of your usage charges. This is always charged regardless of whether you use any energy or not.

Retailers may also have the following fees and charges:

- account establishment fees for new customers
- special meter read fees, including when you move in or out of a property
- connection, re-connection or disconnection fees
- fees for paying your bill in a particular way such as via credit card or over the counter at Australia Post
- late payment fees
- early termination or exit fees
- paper bill fees
- subscription or membership fees.

The fees and charges you pay should be listed on your bill. They are often found under the 'Understand your bill' section. If you're not sure, you can call your retailer and ask.

Discounts, credits and benefits

Some retailers may offer discounts if you pay your bill on time, use a particular payment method or are a customer of another business (such as a bank).

Some retailers may offer credits on your bill as a once-off or for a fixed period of time when you sign up as a new customer.

Some retailers may offer other benefits such as discounted internet or mobile phone plans, memberships or subscriptions (such as online streaming services), tickets and rewards points.

GreenPower

Some retailers may allow you to purchase GreenPower or offer GreenPower plans.

GreenPower is a government-managed program that lets consumers support renewable energy generation. When you buy GreenPower from your electricity retailer, you're paying for renewable energy that meets strict criteria.

You can find out more about GreenPower [here](#).

Embedded Networks

Sometimes apartment blocks, retirement villages and caravan parks (all referred to as 'sites') can be part of what is known as an 'embedded network'.

In embedded networks, the owner of the site sells energy to all of the people that live there. The owner of the site usually buys energy from a retailer and then onells the energy to the people that live there.

People who live in an embedded network are generally unable to switch or sign up to a new retailer. This is because of the way the network wiring is usually designed which means an energy retailer may not want to sell to an embedded network customer. Energy retailers are not obliged to supply you energy if you live in an embedded network. You can find more information about how you may be able to buy your energy directly from a retailer under the 'Embedded Networks' section [here](#) on the AER website.

More information on embedded networks is available [here](#) on the AER website.

Why is my latest energy bill more expensive?

There are a number of reasons why your latest bill may be more expensive than your previous bill.

Some things you can check are:

- **If you have had your electricity meter changed to a smart meter and/or if the type of tariff you are on has changed.** For example, if you are now on a time of use tariff you may be charged a higher price if you use electricity during peak times of the day. Some retailers may also charge a demand charge on top of your usage charges.
- **If you have a smart meter and solar panels, and there has been less sun.** If you have solar panels and there hasn't been as much sun during the period covered by your latest bill (when compared to your previous bill), this means you may have generated less electricity to cover your own usage and/or have received less solar feed-in tariffs for the electricity you generated but didn't use. Solar feed-in tariffs appear as a credit on your bill, so if this amount is less than it was on your previous bill, this will make your latest bill more expensive.
- **If your retailer has changed the tariffs or other charges (such as a daily supply fee which you are charged regardless of whether you use any energy or not).** If you look at your tariffs and daily supply fee charges on your latest bill and compare them to your previous bill this should show you if the prices have increased.
- **If you have a smart meter and time of use tariff and/or demand charge and the times you use electricity have changed.** On these types of plans, you will be charged more for electricity you use at certain times of the day. If you have changed the times you are using electricity, for example, you have stopped working from home and are

consuming more electricity when you get home after 5pm (for example, by running your dishwasher at night rather than during the day), this may make your bill more expensive.

- **If you have a seasonal tariff.** Some retailers may charge you a different price at different times of the year for energy. For example, you might be charged different prices for energy over Winter and Summer months.
- **If a rebate or concession you previously received has changed or stopped.** For example, if you were previously receiving a government energy rebate which stopped or the rebate amount decreased after your previous bill, this will make your latest bill more expensive. You may need to contact the agency that provides the concession or rebate to ask about whether you qualify for a new concession or whether there are any additional rebates available.
- **If your previous or latest bill is based on an estimate of your usage.** Sometimes your retailer may be unable to determine exactly how much energy you have used, so they will estimate your usage. This may happen where you have a smart meter but the data was unable to be provided to your retailer due to technical issues (such as signal issues which can occur in regional areas) or where you have a basic meter and the person who reads your meter was unable to access your meter (such as it was behind a locked gate). Your bill should state that your bill amount is 'based on an estimation' where this occurs. If you're not sure, you can call your retailer and ask. If you were undercharged on your previous bill due to an estimate of your usage, your retailer must allow you to pay the undercharged amount off. If your current bill has been calculated on an estimate of your usage, you can request that your retailer update your bill based on an actual reading. Sometimes you can provide your retailer with a photo of your electricity or gas meter showing your meter number and usage so that they can update your bill. Alternatively, your retailer may send someone out to read your meter, but there may be a charge for this. If you are unsure, you can ask your retailer for more information.
- **If you have incurred any additional fees.** For example, if your retailer attempted to conduct a meter reading but was unable to do so for any reason, resulting in the need for a second meter reading, you may have been charged for this meter reading. Any additional fees should be outlined in the 'Understand your bill' section of your latest bill.
- **If you owed money on your previous bill.** If there was an unpaid balance on your previous bill, this would make your latest bill more expensive.
- **If the billing cycle is longer than your previous bill.** If your previous bill was for a shorter billing cycle, for example for a period of 88 days, and your latest bill is for a longer billing cycle, for example for a period of 100 days, this may make your latest bill more expensive.
- **If you are using energy differently.** If you have increased your use of air conditioning, heating or electric hot water, purchased and used additional appliances or the number of people in your household consuming energy has increased, these things may make your latest bill more expensive.

The fees and charges you are required to pay and any rebates, concessions or credits you receive are listed on your bill. They are usually found under the 'Understand your bill' section. If you're not sure, you can call your retailer and ask.

How can I save money on my energy bill?

Information about how you may be able to save on your electricity or gas bill by switching to a new plan or retailer is available under the 'Shopping around' section [here](#) on the AER website.

Supports available

Retailers have supports available if you need them now or in the future.

Are you having difficulty paying your bill?

If you are having difficulty paying your energy bill for any reason, contact your retailer.

Your retailer may be able to offer you a payment extension, payment plan or add you to their hardship program. Your retailer may also be able to waive any late payment or other fees.

Retailers are required to have a hardship policy which list the supports available to customers who are having difficulty paying their energy bills. You should be able to find this on your retailer's website or call them to request a free copy of their policy.

You are considered a **hardship customer** if you are a residential customer (not a business customer) who is identified (either by yourself or your retailer) as experiencing payment difficulties due to hardship.

Hardship can occur for a number of reasons, so if you have difficulty paying your bill for any reason you should contact your retailer as soon as possible.

More information on hardship is available under the 'Hardship and payment difficulties' section [here](#) on the AER website.

Family and domestic violence support

Your retailer has support available if you are affected by family violence.

Family violence, also referred to as domestic violence or abuse, involves a pattern of behaviour intended to coerce, control or dominate someone in a domestic, intimate, family, or family-like relationship. Family violence may take many forms including physical, emotional, psychological, financial, economic, sexual, social, technological and spiritual abuse.

Retailers are required to have a family violence policy which list the supports available to customers affected by family violence. You should be able to find this on your retailer's website or call them to request a free copy of their policy.

More information on family violence support is available under the 'Family violence' section [here](#) on the AER website.

Concessions and rebates

There may be concessions and/or rebates available to you, depending on which State or Territory you live in.

If you want to know if you are eligible for a concession or rebate, you should contact your retailer.

Contact us

Australian Energy Regulator (AER)	
Phone	1300 585 165 or +61 2 6243 1306 (International) Monday to Friday, 10am to 3pm AEST/AEDT
Website	www.aer.gov.au
Email	aer inquiry@ aer.gov.au
Post	GPO Box 3131 Canberra ACT 2601
First Nations Infoline	
Phone	1300 303 143 A dedicated phone service for Indigenous Australians seeking information about their consumer rights and consumer protection
Languages other than English	
Phone	13 14 50 and ask for the AER on 1300 585 165
Website	www.tisnational.gov.au
Hearing and speech assistance	
National Relay Service – TTY Users	
Phone	13 36 77 and ask for the AER on 1300 585 165
National Relay Service – Speak and Listen	
Phone	1300 555 727 and ask for the AER on 1300 585 165
National Relay Service – Internet Relay	
Website	Visit nrschat.nrscall.gov.au/nrs/internetrelay and ask for the AER on 1300 585 165

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