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AUSTRALIAN
ENERGY
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Electricity and natural gas—information for tenants

How this information sheet will help you

This information sheet helps tenants and residents of share houses to understand their electricity and/or natural gas service. It also explains:

- ☑ who is responsible for getting electricity and natural gas services connected at a rental property
- ☑ how to get electricity and natural gas for your rental property
- ☑ what to do when moving out
- ☑ where you can go for help

Who is responsible for paying electricity and/or natural gas bills in my rental home?

The tenant

If you have a standard Residential Tenancy Agreement, you will be responsible for getting electricity and/or natural gas in your new rental home. To get electricity or natural gas you need to enter a contract with an electricity or natural gas retailer.

- **What is an electricity or natural gas contract?**
Electricity and natural gas contracts are agreements allowing you to receive electricity and/or natural gas at your home or business.
- **What is an electricity or natural gas retailer?**
Electricity and natural gas retailers are the companies that bill you for the electricity and natural gas you use. Customers in Queensland, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and South Australia are able to choose their electricity or natural gas retailer. Retailers offer a range of electricity and natural gas contracts for customers to choose from.¹

¹ In Tasmania, all residents and small business customers using less than 50MWh are not able to choose their electricity contract or retailer. Instead, these customers have a standard contract with a host retailer. For more information, refer to the Tasmanian energy regulator's website: *Power to Choose* (www.power.tas.gov.au).

The landlord

If your lease states that electricity and/or natural gas usage is included as part of your rent, you don't need to enter a contract with an electricity and/or natural gas retailer. Instead, your landlord is responsible to enter a contract to supply your rental home with electricity and/or natural gas. Also, your landlord can generally only bill you separately for your electricity and/or natural gas use, if your home has an electricity and/or natural gas meter installed. This requirement applies in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, but does not apply in all circumstances in Queensland. If you have a question about your electricity and/or natural gas service, you should contact your landlord or the residential tenancy authority in your state or territory. Refer to *Tenancy authorities* at end of this information sheet for contact details.

Choosing an electricity and/or natural gas contract

Are all electricity and natural gas contracts the same?

Not all electricity and natural gas contracts are the same. Each electricity/natural gas retailer offers a range of contracts that can differ in their terms and conditions, price, length, payment options, other fees and charges, green power options and non-cash rewards.

Why is it important to choose the right contract for you?

When and how you use electricity and/or natural gas will make some contracts more suitable for you than others. It is therefore important to invest a little time to choose a contract that is right for your circumstances. If you choose a contract that is not suited to your needs, you may end up paying more for your electricity and/or natural gas than you need to. For example, some market contracts apply for a particular period of time, such as one year, and if you cancel the contract early, for example, after six months, you might have to pay an extra fee for early termination.

For further information about choosing an electricity and/or natural gas contract, see the AER information sheet: *How do I choose an electricity and/or natural gas contract?* which is available on the 'for consumers' section of the AER website (www.aer.gov.au).

Living in a share house

When you open an account in your name, you take personal responsibility for all future bills even if you're in a share house. If the account is in more than one name, each person can be held responsible. Ensure that all account holder details are up-to-date and that everyone in your household agrees on who will be responsible for paying the bills.



What happens when I move out?

To disconnect the electricity and/or natural gas at your old home you need to contact your electricity and/or natural gas retailer to cancel your contract. It may take a few days to cancel an electricity and/or natural gas contract, so it is best to tell your retailer as soon as you know when you are moving out, and provide a forwarding address so your retailer can send you the final bill. Most retailers require at least three days notice. If you don't cancel your contract, you may be charged for electricity and/or natural gas that is used after you leave. If you paid a security deposit to enter the contract, make sure it is refunded to you when you cancel the contract.

If you are moving out of a share house and your name is on the electricity and/or natural gas bill, make sure you reach an agreement with your housemates about who will be responsible for paying electricity and/or natural gas bills after you leave and transfer the bills into their name.

It's a good idea to keep a record of any meter readings, copies of your bills and letters, and notes of any contact with the retailer and distributor, for your records.

Concessions and grants

If you are having trouble paying an electricity and/or natural gas bill you should contact your retailer as soon as possible to discuss your situation. Getting help early can mean you avoid extra fees and being at risk of disconnection. Retailers are also able to give you information about a range of payment assistance options that may be available to you. For further information, see the AER information sheet: *Need help paying your electricity or natural gas bills?* which is available on the 'for consumers' section of the AER website (www.aer.gov.au).

Tenancy authorities

The Energy Ombudsmen cannot help you with tenant/landlord problems. Instead, if you are in a private rental home and have a problem with your landlord you can contact the tenancy authority in your state or territory.

Queensland

Queensland Residential Tenancy Authority
1300 366 311 www.rta.qld.gov.au

New South Wales

NSW Fair Trading
13 3220 www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au

Australian Capital Territory

ACT Office of Fair Trading
02 6207 3000 www.ors.act.gov.au/community/fair_trading

Victoria

Consumer Affairs Victoria
1300 558 181 www.consumer.vic.gov.au

South Australia

Office of Consumer and Business Affairs
08 8204 9777 www.ocba.sa.gov.au

Tasmania

Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading
1300 654 499 www.consumer.tas.gov.au/renting

Enquiries and complaints about electricity and natural gas

The following complaints information applies to you if you have a contract with an electricity or natural gas retailer. If your gas and electricity service is managed by your landlord, you need to contact them with any queries or complaints.

Electricity and natural gas retailers and distributors are required to have complaints-handling and dispute resolution arrangements. This includes a process for complaints to be escalated to senior officers or managers if callers are not satisfied with the initial response they receive.

First

If you have a complaint about your electricity or natural gas contract, or about sales representations made about an electricity or natural gas contract, you should contact your retailer or distributor.

When to contact your electricity or natural gas retailer

Electricity and natural gas retailers are responsible for electricity and natural gas sales and billing. You should contact your retailer for questions about:

- getting connected to the network
- arranging for electricity or natural gas to be supplied to your home or business
- the selling of electricity and natural gas, including:
 - the accuracy of representations made by a salesperson representing the retailer
 - the way in which an electricity or natural gas contract was sold to you, for example, if the salesperson pressured you
- your rights in relation to cancelling or varying a contract
- a new contract that was entered without your consent
- any billing issues.

When to contact your electricity or natural gas distributor

Electricity and natural gas distributors own and maintain the distribution networks, including electricity powerlines and power poles, and natural gas pipelines that carry electricity and natural gas to houses and businesses. You should contact your distributor for questions about:

- your electricity and natural gas meters
- powerlines and natural gas pipelines connecting your premises to the network in your street
- power outages
- problems with supply quality, such as low frequency (for example, low frequency occurs when your lights dim).

Second

If you are not satisfied with the response from the call centre staff member, you should ask to speak with a senior officer or manager.

Third

If you have spoken with a senior officer or manager and your complaint is still unresolved, you can refer your complaint to the Energy Ombudsman in your state or territory.

The Ombudsman can help to resolve your complaint with an electricity or natural gas retailer or distributor. Customers do not pay an extra charge for using the Ombudsman's service.

Ombudsman schemes

Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland
1800 662 837 www.eoq.com.au

Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW
1800 246 545 www.ewon.com.au

ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal
02 6207 1740 www.acat.act.gov.au

Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria)
1800 500 509 www.ewov.com.au

Energy Industry Ombudsman South Australia
1800 665 565 www.eiosa.com.au

Energy Ombudsman Tasmania
1800 001 170 www.energyombudsman.tas.gov.au

For further information

This publication can be downloaded from the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) website.

AER contacts 1300 302 502 www.aer.gov.au

Other ACCC contacts

ACCC Indigenous Infoline: 1300 303 143

For information in languages other than English, call 13 1450 and ask for 1300 302 502

TTY service for people with hearing or speech difficulties:
1300 303 609 www.accc.gov.au

This information has been prepared for customers in Queensland, New South Wales, the ACT, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. For information about electricity and natural gas in Western Australia, customers should contact the Economic Regulation Authority of Western Australia (www.erawa.com.au). Customers in the Northern Territory should contact the Utilities Commission of the Northern Territory (www.utilicom.nt.gov.au) for information about electricity and natural gas.

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Important notice

The information in this publication is for general guidance only. It does not constitute legal or other professional advice, and should not be relied on as a statement of the law in any jurisdiction. Because it is intended only as a general guide, it may contain generalisations. You should obtain professional advice if you have any specific concern.

The ACCC has made every reasonable effort to provide current and accurate information, but it does not make any guarantees regarding the accuracy, currency or completeness of that information.

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