



Energy costs and your business

What small business operators need to know

March 2018

- ▶ Reduce the impact of energy price increases.

Shop around

Compare charges from electricity and gas retailers in your area. Go to the Australian Energy Regulator's independent website www.energymadeeasy.gov.au and enter the usage from a recent bill and your postcode. You may be able to identify a more economical offer.

Your current supplier might be willing to negotiate on price if a competitor's price is better.



Energy costs are rising

Ask for discounts

If your business is on a market retail (or fixed term) contract for electricity or gas, ask about discounts for paying on time, opening a dual-fuel account or paying by direct debit.

Try to negotiate a new contract well before yours expires, and remember to contact your supplier in advance, as they may not be required to notify you of the expiry date.



Shop around

Negotiate your contract

If your market retail contract term has expired and you haven't renegotiated a new contract, it's likely that your account will be rolled over to a standard retail contract. Standard rates (also known as default rates) are typically higher than market ones and don't have customer incentives such as discounts.

If you are on a contract that automatically renews and this wasn't made clear at the beginning, contact the NSW Small Business Commissioner for help by phone 1300 795 534 or email we.assist@smallbusiness.nsw.gov.au



Compare suppliers in your area

Reduce your energy costs

In the longer term, changing the way your business uses energy may help to reduce your bill or offset price increases. These websites have tips on saving energy:

- ▶ Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW: www.ewon.com.au
- ▶ Australian Government: <http://yourenergysavings.gov.au/energy>
- ▶ www.australia.gov.au/information-and-services/environment/energy-efficiency
- ▶ www.energymadeeasy.gov.au/control-your-costs

The NSW Office of Environment & Heritage offers specialist programs that give businesses practical and financial help for using energy more efficiently and sustainably: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/business



For more information:



1300 795 534



we.assist@smallbusiness.nsw.gov.au



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Help for tenants

Your lease should state clearly who is responsible for paying energy and water accounts.

Suppliers 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, contact the account holder.

If you have a dispute about responsibility for charges or are unable to get the account holder's help to have your energy or water problem resolved, contact the NSW Small Business Commissioner by phone 1300 795 534 or email we.assist@smallbusiness.nsw.gov.au

If the landlord is the energy reseller and you think you are not being given a market rate, we may be able to help you negotiate a better deal.

Don't pay more than you need to

When starting business in new premises and opening an energy account, check the tariff classification code for the site with your energy retailer. Will it be adequate for the day-to-day energy demands of your business?

Charges and rates are usually higher for businesses classified as large retail customers. You can save on operating costs by having your new premises classified as a smaller user. Ask your retailer to help you submit a network request to change your tariff code.

When moving premises

If your business premises are separately metered for energy and/or water, make a note of the meter reading when moving in and out. Notify your retailer in advance when finalising your account so that a final meter reading can be obtained within sufficient time.

Know your rights

- ▶ If your business's annual energy consumption is less than 100 megawatt hours electricity or 1,000 gigajoules gas, your business could be classified as a small customer under the National Energy Retail Rules. This can offer your small business some customer protections.
- ▶ For example, if you are suffering financial hardship and finding it hard to pay your bills on time, your retailer is required by law to help you. Find out what assistance is available at: www.aer.gov.au/consumers/my-energy-bill/experiencing-trouble-paying-your-energy-bills

Advice and help

- ▶ The Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) provides a free, independent dispute resolution service for all electricity and gas customers in NSW. Contact EWON on 1800 246 545 or go to www.ewon.com.au
- ▶ The NSW Small Business Commissioner helps businesses resolve commercial disputes. Phone the office on 1300 795 534 or email we.assist@smallbusiness.nsw.gov.au



For more information:



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