



Connecting the electricity

In most tenancies, it is the lease holder's responsibility to connect and pay for electricity. You can confirm whether this applies to you by checking page 2 of your Tenancy Agreement.



Choosing a retailer

In South East Queensland there are 29 different electricity retailers to choose from and the plans on offer can vary greatly. It is important to understand plan inclusions and costs before signing up with a retailer.

Take your time to compare offers from different electricity retailers. One retailer may have multiple plans available, meaning that you could have over 100 options to choose from. The website energymadeeasy.gov.au is a free comparison site that allows you to find out which retailers service your area and what plans are available. This site is impartial; it lists all available electricity plans and you do not have to enter your personal details to access information. Other comparison sites are paid commissions by electricity retailers and do not compare all available plans; they collect your information and then offer you services that they are paid to promote.

In deciding on an electricity retailer you should consider:

- Price - There will be a daily supply charge as well as usage charges. Most homes are charged for standard usage on Tariff 11. Sometimes hot water is charged on Tariff 31 or 33.
- Fees – This could include establishment fees, early termination fees, fees for late payments or if a direct debit is dishonoured or fees for a special meter read.
- Discounts and what you need to do to get them
- Payment methods and whether there are extra fees associated with any of them (direct debit, Centrepay, Bpay, post office)
- Hardship policy – All energy retailers must have a hardship policy but not all policies are equal. Most electricity retailers have information about their hardship policy and extra support available to vulnerable customers on their website.

The Australian Energy Regulator says:

“Don't be dazzled by discounts! A bigger discount doesn't always mean a bigger saving – check the rates the discount applies to. Also, check what conditions you need to meet to get the discount – some discounts only apply if you pay on time or pay by direct debit.”



Connecting

To connect your electricity, contact your preferred retailer by phone or online. You will need to provide your name and new address details. They may also ask for proof of ID or information about the electricity meter. Most electricity retailers require notice of 1-3 working days to connect a new account.

If you hold a Health Care Card or Pension Concession Card issued by Centrelink, a Gold Card issued by Department of Veterans' Affairs, a Queensland Seniors Card or an ImmiCard for people seeking asylum, you

may be eligible for a Queensland Government rebate on your electricity. This rebate is deducted off your electricity bill each month or quarter. Make sure you provide the electricity retailer with your concession card details when you sign up, or as soon as possible after receiving the card, to take advantage of the savings.



Credit History

Electricity retailers will usually do a credit check before signing up new customers. If you have a poor credit history, the company may decline your request to connect through them. However, electricity is an essential service; there must be one retailer that will supply electricity to your home. This is known as the 'designated retailer' and is the company that most recently supplied electricity to the property, even if that was to a previous resident. The designated retailer cannot refuse to connect a person on the grounds of poor credit history, however the choice of plans they offer may be limited. To find out who the designated retailer is for a property in South East Queensland, contact Energex on 13 12 53.



Billing

Unless your home has a smart meter, your electricity meter will be read manually on a quarterly basis. You must ensure that there is safe access to the meter for the meter reader. If the meter reader is unable to access the meter, your electricity retailer may issue an estimated bill, or you may be able to submit your own meter reading - contact your electricity retailer to find out how to do this.

Electricity bills will be sent to you, by post, email or an sms linking to the electricity retailer's app, on a monthly or quarterly basis. Electricity is expensive. It is important to budget for your ongoing electricity usage; there is a lot of information on your bill to help you understand what you are paying for. Your electricity retailer may have information about how to read their bills on their website, or you might prefer to ask your Case Manager or a Financial Resilience worker to explain your bill to you.



Extra assistance

If you aren't able to pay your bill on time, contact the electricity retailer. You can ask for an extension or arrange a payment plan. Ask to speak to the Hardship Team to find out all your options when it comes to managing the affordability of electricity.

Depending on your circumstances, you may be eligible for the Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme, a Queensland Government funded program to help people on low incomes who have had an unexpected loss of income or expense. Contact your electricity retailer to find out more.

If you have a dispute that you're unable to resolve directly with your electricity retailer, the Energy & Water Ombudsman Queensland may be able to help with negotiations. Visit ewoq.com.au for more information.

Information in this factsheet has been collated by Kyabra Community Association in July 2020 with support from Ecstra Foundation. Further information is available from:

- Australian Energy Regulator www.aer.gov.au/
- Energy Made Easy www.energymadeeasy.gov.au/
- Queensland Government www.qld.gov.au/community/cost-of-living-support/concessions

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