



# High electricity, gas or water bills

## USE THIS FACT SHEET IF YOU:

- want to know what is causing your high bill
- want to be energy and water efficient
- have difficulty paying your bill



A lot of customers contact us because they have problems paying a high bill. Many people tend to under estimate their energy or water usage and are unaware of the amount of energy or water their home or business actually use.

## POSSIBLE CAUSES OF HIGH BILLS

### The weather

It's important to stay comfortable during a cold winter or hot summer but it's also important to keep costs down. The increased use in air conditioners, heaters or water for your garden during these times can significantly increase your bill.

### More people in your home

Often people forget that they had guests stay for a considerable amount of time, additional housemates or new members of the family have joined the household. This can impact on your energy and water usage.

### New technologies and stand-by mode

New changes in technology can contribute to the increase in energy use, for example LCD and plasma televisions consume more power than the traditional cathode ray tube televisions. Also, many modern household appliances use significant amounts of electricity in stand-by mode (when the appliance is not in use but is still turned on at the wall). So if you're not using it, turn it off at the wall where practical.

### Faulty appliances

Faulty, old and inefficient appliances can cause a significant increase in the total amount of energy used. An electrician can check your

appliances for faults if you believe there is a problem.

### Energy guzzlers

Some home appliances are obvious energy guzzlers such as heaters and air conditioners, but things like pool pumps and fish tank pumps can also use a lot of electricity.

### Leaks/faulty meters

An unusually high bill could be caused by a gas or water leak or faulty meter. Read your meters to check for leaks or ask your energy or water supplier to check. You can also ask for a meter test to ensure it is working accurately (you may be charged for this).

### Estimated accounts

Your energy or water supplier is entitled to estimate your bill, which is usually based on prior usage. This means you could be sent a high 'catch up' bill when your meter is read or you are paying for more than you've used. To avoid this, contact your retailer to find out what other arrangements can be made to read your meter.

### Other fees and charges

There are a number of other fees and charges that can be included in your bill, such as late payment fees or account establishment fees. These are additional to your consumption charges.

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## POSSIBLE CAUSES OF HIGH BILLS (continued)

### Tariff changes

Tariff changes usually come into effect on 1 July each year and can affect the amount of your bill.

### Delayed billing

There can be delays in the billing process and you might get a bill for a longer period than usual.

### Supplier error

If you believe your bill is unusually high because your supplier has made an error, you can ask them to explain why or to carry out a full investigation. If you are still unsatisfied after contacting your retailer, you can contact EWOQ for assistance.

## BE ENERGY AND WATER EFFICIENT

Energy and water efficiency can save you money on your bills and can help ease the burden on the environment. Below are some tips to help you save money.

- Replace worn or damaged fridge seals
- Buy energy and water efficient appliances
- Use energy-efficient light bulbs
- Set your air conditioner at 24 degrees
- Switch to off-peak electricity
- If you're not using it, turn it off at the wall
- Insulate your walls and ceilings
- Use washing machines, dishwashers and dryers at full capacity only
- Plant a water wise garden
- Install a water tank

## PAYMENT DIFFICULTIES

If you are having trouble paying your bill, contact your energy or water retailer immediately to find out what assistance they can provide to avoid disconnection or restriction.

If you cannot agree with your energy or water retailer on the way to manage your financial hardship, contact EWOQ for assistance.

## USEFUL LINKS

### Energywise calculator

The Queensland Government has developed an online energy calculator to help you estimate the costs of your household electricity use.

[www.dme.qld.gov.au](http://www.dme.qld.gov.au)

### Energy and water efficient ratings

Australia's leading guide to choosing energy and water efficient appliances.

[www.energyrating.gov.au](http://www.energyrating.gov.au) or [www.waterrating.gov.au](http://www.waterrating.gov.au)

### Being waterwise

The Department of Environment and Resource Management has fact sheets on waterwise homes and gardens. Complete the water audit to see where you can save water.

[www.derm.qld.gov.au/waterwise](http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/waterwise)

### Pricing

Shop around for cheaper electricity or gas using the Queensland Competition Authority's price comparator.

[www.qca.org.au](http://www.qca.org.au)

Check what you're charged for water.

[www.allconnex.com.au](http://www.allconnex.com.au) or [www.urbanutilities.com.au](http://www.urbanutilities.com.au) or [www.unitywater.com](http://www.unitywater.com)

## TIPS FOR RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

- 1 If you have any problems with your energy or water company, contact them first and explain your situation. Keep records of letters, names, times and dates.
- 2 If the call centre staff can't help you, ask to speak to a supervisor.
- 3 If the problem is still not fixed, contact EWOQ to make a complaint.

## ABOUT EWOQ

Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ) is a free, fair and independent dispute resolution service for residential and small business energy customers across Queensland and water customers in south east Queensland.



energy+water  
ombudsman  
QUEENSLAND

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