



Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) Scheme

What is EAPA?

The Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) Scheme helps people living in NSW experiencing a short term financial crisis or emergency to pay their electricity or gas bill. The scheme helps people stay connected to essential energy services during a financial crisis and is not available on an ongoing basis.

How does the EAPA scheme work?

The EAPA Scheme operates through a voucher system. Each voucher is worth \$50 with each voucher booklet containing 10 vouchers. St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Regional Councils directly receive EAPA vouchers from NSW Government at no cost to the Society. Conferences can issue EAPA vouchers to clients based on their assessment of client circumstances. The Society EAPA Assessment form must be completed prior to issuing EAPA. Clients can then pay their energy bill (electricity or gas) using the EAPA vouchers within 14 days of receipts.

How many EAPA vouchers can be issued to a client?

- maximum \$250 (5 vouchers) per bill
- maximum \$500 (10 vouchers) per financial year (per household)
- maximum of two EAPA grants per household per financial year
- maximum of two EAPA grants per bill

If exceptional circumstances merit the issuing of EAPA vouchers above the limits, you may issue EAPA vouchers above these limits. **Please note that if you issue more than \$1000 EAPA vouchers to a client you need to notify NSW Trade & Investment department by emailing epa.info@trade.nsw.gov.au**

Is it necessary to contact the Energy Retailer before issuing EAPA voucher?

Yes. You should make reasonable attempt to contact retailers, however:

- You are not expected to make a call from your mobile phone;
- If a client has a landline but does not allow you to use it, you are not expected to call the retailer ;
- You are not required to be on hold for more than 5-10 minutes;
- If you visit clients after hours and are unable to re-schedule the visit, it might not be possible for you to contact the retailer which is acceptable.

The only time it is mandatory to call a retailer before assessment is when the client gets an electronic bill (i.e via email) as it is hard to ascertain if a printed bill is original or not.

For further information or clarification please refer to the EAPA guidelines or contact:

NSW Trade & Investment, Division of Resources & Energy,

Phone: 1300 729 867

Email: epa.info@trade.nsw.gov.au

Service NSW,

Phone: 137788



Trade &
Investment
Resources & Energy

ENERGY ACCOUNTS PAYMENT ASSISTANCE SCHEME

(EAPA) DELIVERY GUIDELINES



EAPA

A crisis scheme for NSW energy customers

In force on and from 1 July 2013

ENERGY ACCOUNTS PAYMENT ASSISTANCE (EAPA) DELIVERY GUIDELINES

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) Scheme is funded by the NSW Government and administered by the NSW Department of Trade & Investment, Division of Resources & Energy. The purpose of the EAPA Scheme is to help customers who are experiencing a financial crisis or emergency and need help to pay their home electricity and/or natural gas (energy) bills. The Scheme is designed to help these customers stay connected to essential energy services. It is a crisis scheme and not intended to offer ongoing income support.
- 1.2 EAPA is delivered by providing vouchers to customers. Currently each voucher has a face value of \$50. Licensed energy retailers accept EAPA vouchers as part payment of customers' energy bills and are reimbursed by the NSW Government.
- 1.3 The Energy Accounts Payment Assistance Delivery Guidelines are specifically for community welfare organisations and other organisations which are approved by the Department to distribute vouchers to customers. These organisations are termed "EAPA Providers". References to "you" throughout these guidelines are references to EAPA Providers and their paid and volunteer staff. References to "we" and "us" are a reference to the Department.
- 1.4 The Department issues vouchers (in books of 10) to EAPA Providers on a quarterly basis. The guidelines set out the criteria that EAPA Providers must use to assess whether a customer is eligible to receive EAPA vouchers, and the procedures that must be followed.
- 1.5 Compliance with these guidelines is a condition of participating in the EAPA Scheme as an EAPA Provider.
- 1.6 If an EAPA Provider breaches the guidelines, the Department may suspend the allocation of vouchers to that organisation, and if the breach is severe or ongoing, may terminate the organisation's approval to participate in the EAPA Scheme. These guidelines may be amended from time to time by the Department and only the current version will apply. These guidelines replace the 2005 version of the EAPA Guideline for Community Welfare Organisations published by the Department of Energy, Utilities and Sustainability – a predecessor of the Department.

2. Who is an eligible Customer?

- 2.1 EAPA vouchers should only be distributed to eligible customers. An eligible customer:
 - a. Is an energy account holder with a licensed energy retailer (i.e. the current bill¹ is solely or jointly in his or her name); AND
 - b. The energy account is for NSW residential premises (i.e. the current bill charges are on a residential or rural tariff for energy used at their home); AND
 - c. The customer is currently undergoing financial hardship² as a result of which the client has demonstrated that they are denying basic needs OR do not have enough money to pay their energy bill and as a result of which, they may face disconnection, or have been disconnected.
- 2.2 Each customer who applies for EAPA must be individually assessed using the Assessment Form set out in Appendix 1 to these guidelines, or using an alternate form that captures at least all of the information requested in the Assessment Form. Assessments must take place in person, unless the Department has given written approval to the EAPA Provider to conduct assessments by telephone.

1 Current bill is the first issued bill for the current payment period.

2 Financial hardship means the customer does not have enough income to meet basic needs of food, housing, energy supply and health.

IMPORTANT ASSESSMENT INFORMATION FOR EAPA PROVIDERS

- Prior to assessing the customer for EAPA, reasonable attempts should be made to contact the customer's energy retailer (with the customer's permission) to discuss:
 - ◆ other assistance options for the customer such as payment plans, Centrepay³, extensions of time to pay or support through the retailer's hardship program;
 - ◆ details such as whether the customer is receiving all rebates and/or other forms of retailer assistance they may be entitled to;
 - ◆ an updated balance and breakdown of consumption and non consumption charges; and
 - ◆ details of any EAPA received by the customer in the current financial year (1 July – 30 June) including on their current bill(s).
- At the time the customer is assessed for EAPA, the customer should also be helped to consider more sustainable measures to improve his or her ability to pay future energy bills (such as reducing energy consumption or changing their energy usage patterns where appropriate). This is also time to help them consider whether they are taking advantage of any NSW Government rebates, financial counselling or other programs that might be relevant.
- To determine whether someone is eligible for EAPA, you will need their original current⁴ energy bill from a licensed energy retailer. If the customer has not brought an original copy with them for an EAPA assessment you must contact their energy retailer (with the customer's permission) for a duplicate copy. Reminder notices, disconnection notices and photocopies of energy bills from the customer are not acceptable.
- If a person is unable to be assessed for EAPA at the time of application, advise the customer to contact their energy retailer or contact the retailer (with the customer's permission) to advise that the customer is waiting for an EAPA assessment to be completed. The retailer cannot disconnect the customer while EAPA is being assessed.
- You must never issue EAPA to yourself, your friend or your relative⁵. Below are procedures to follow if you believe you may be eligible for EAPA or your friends or relatives ask you for EAPA:
 - ◆ If you believe you might be eligible for EAPA you should apply to a different EAPA Provider. If this is not possible, you may be assessed for EAPA by your manager provided your manager notes this on a file at your organisation and contacts the Department whose details appear at the end of these guidelines.
 - ◆ If your friends or relatives ask you for EAPA vouchers, you must refer them to a different EAPA Provider. However, if there is no different EAPA Provider reasonably able to assess the friend or relative, you can refer them to a different worker at your organisation.

3 Customers who receive benefits through the Commonwealth Government's Department of Human Services may be able to use a service known as Centrepay to make payments towards particular bills. Centrepay works by making a deduction from each regular Government benefit payment received by a customer and crediting this towards a customer's energy bill. Most energy retailers in NSW can offer Centrepay to their customers, and this is a free service. For more information customers can contact their retailer.

4 Current bill is the first issued bill for the current payment period.

5 A relative is a parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, brother, sister, aunt, uncle or cousin, or in any of these cases, the partner of that relative.

3. How many Vouchers should be issued?

3.1 The following limits apply to each eligible customer (or household where electricity and natural gas bills for the same household are issued in different names):

- EAPA should not be issued to any customer (or household) on more than two occasions in any financial year, i.e. from 1 July to 30 June;
- The maximum amount of EAPA that can be issued for any energy bill is \$250 (five vouchers);
- The maximum amount of EAPA that can be issued to any customer (or household) during a financial year is \$500 (10 vouchers);
- The amount of EAPA vouchers issued should not put the energy bill into credit;
- EAPA can only be used to pay for energy usage (measured in cents per kilowatt hour for electricity or cents per megajoule for natural gas) and energy availability (e.g. Service Availability Charge or SAC), including related Goods and Services Tax ("GST"). EAPA cannot be used to pay for any other charges such as late payment fees, disconnection fees, reconnection fees, special meter reading fees, purchase of appliances, etc.

LATE PAYMENT FEE WAIVERS

For energy customers on standard contracts (where the prices are regulated by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal or IPART), late payment fees must be waived if the customer has paid some, or their entire bill with an EAPA voucher. Where EAPA is provided to a customer, check if they are on a standard contract and if so advise them of this protection or contact the retailer (with the customer's permission).

Once a customer has been assessed as eligible, you must determine how many EAPA vouchers to provide. The minimum amount of vouchers provided should be that which will prevent the customer's energy supply from being disconnected, or allow them to have their supply reconnected or to meet their basic needs. The maximum should be the limits that apply to the customer as set out in section 3.1. Within these minimum and maximum amounts, you can use your discretion to determine the number of vouchers to be provided, taking into account the customer's circumstances.

- 3.2 Do not ration or restrict the amount of EAPA provided to customers in an attempt to maintain or manage stocks at your organisation. Management of EAPA voucher books is the responsibility of the Department.
- 3.3 If you are starting to run low on vouchers see section 5 of these guidelines.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MORE THAN ONE EAPA PROVIDER OR WORKER ISSUES VOUCHERS

EAPA can be issued in up to two instances for the same bill. This is why it is necessary to check the customer's original current⁶ bill to see if it has already been stamped by another worker or a different EAPA Provider.

You can issue extra vouchers in addition to those issued by another worker or EAPA Provider, as long as the limits set out in section 3.1 and the "important assessment information for EAPA Providers" section of these guidelines are observed. If you do this, you should tick and sign the relevant boxes on the voucher(s) to alert the retailer that more than one issue of EAPA has been given for this bill. If you do not tick and sign the boxes, the retailer will not honour the voucher(s) you have issued.

⁶ Current bill is the first issued bill for the current payment period.

4. Exceptional Circumstances

- 4.1 In some exceptional circumstances, you can issue an amount of EAPA vouchers that exceeds the limits set out in section 3 of these guidelines to otherwise eligible customers (although you can never issue EAPA that puts the customer's bill into credit or issue EAPA for charges other than energy availability or usage including GST). The issue of vouchers in exceptional circumstances is intended to prevent an unduly harsh outcome, particularly where the customer's circumstances are unforeseeable.
- 4.2 Where exceptional circumstances are established, the customer must still be an eligible customer as defined in section 2.1.
- 4.3 When EAPA is granted for exceptional circumstances, you must still carry out the steps that would normally be taken (see "important assessment information for EAPA Providers" section of these guidelines).
- 4.4 You must also note that EAPA limit/s have been exceeded and detail the reason for exceeding the limits in the EAPA Assessment Form (see Appendix 1 to these guidelines).
- 4.5 Original or electronic copies of the Assessment Forms must be retained by the EAPA Provider for at least two years from the date of assessment.

STEPS REQUIRED TO ISSUE VOUCHERS

Once you have assessed a customer as eligible, completed the Assessment Form at Appendix 1 of these guidelines and determined how many EAPA vouchers to provide, you are required to complete the steps below:

1. Advise the customer of the outcome of the assessment and of the determination. Make sure the customer understands that some information about the payment of EAPA will be provided to the Department. This information is printed on the reverse of each EAPA voucher.
2. For every voucher issued (even if providing multiple vouchers to the one customer), ensure all details on each voucher are completed. If you make an error in completing any details you can draw a line through the error, enter in the correct details and, initial the amendments. Correction fluid such as 'Liquid Paper' is not acceptable. If the error is not able to be fixed please return the voucher to the Department and start again on a new voucher for the customer. Remember to tick and sign the boxes on the voucher to confirm validity if you are:
 - a. Allocating vouchers to a person for the second time on the same bill; OR
 - b. Allocating vouchers to a person who has already received vouchers from another organisation for the same bill.
3. Sign and stamp the voucher with your organisation's stamp. EAPA vouchers should be stamped only after all other required information has been written on the vouchers.
4. Stamp the customer's original or duplicate copy of the current⁷ bill with the EAPA stamp and fill in all the details. If you do not have an EAPA stamp your manager or the nominated EAPA contact can order these from the Department. Until the EAPA stamp arrives, the equivalent details e.g. voucher amount, issuing organisation (EAPA Provider), authorised representative and issue date can be written on the bill. EAPA stamps should be stored securely and separately from unused vouchers.
5. Advise the customer to send the stamped and completed vouchers to their retailer within the validity period as printed on the voucher/s. Most retailers accept vouchers that have been lodged in person at Australia Post outlets. If not, the customer should post the voucher(s) to the retailer. The vouchers will expire after a certain number of calendar days from the date of issue, as noted on each voucher.

⁷ Current energy bill is the first issued bill for the current payment period.

6. If a customer presents with an expired EAPA voucher and asks to have it revalidated, this can only be done by the EAPA Provider who originally issued the voucher. Vouchers are revalidated by crossing out the date, writing in the new date, restamping all vouchers with your organisation's stamp and initialling all changes. In addition, vouchers can only be revalidated during the financial year that they were originally issued in.
7. File the completed Assessment Form. Originals or electronic copies of this form must be stored for at least two years from the date of assessment.
8. Details of the customer's financial hardship circumstances should be noted on the customer's file.
9. Once all vouchers in a voucher book are issued, complete the date of issue for all vouchers in the table on the book cover.
10. Once step 9 has been followed, post the voucher book cover to the Department promptly (no postage stamp is required) and ensure either the original or electronic copies of the voucher stubs are securely stored at your organisation for two years. Ensure that all completed voucher book covers are returned to the Department as soon as they have been used so that the Department has accurate information on the use of EAPA.

5. If the EAPA Provider is starting to run low on Vouchers

- 5.1 In some cases, you may be eligible for a supplementary allocation of EAPA. However this is not automatic as the Department needs to manage and allocate vouchers efficiently and effectively within the budget available. The budget for EAPA is set by NSW Treasury and allocated to the Department on a financial year basis.
- 5.2 Your manager or the nominated EAPA contact should make a request in writing to the Department for a supplementary allocation of EAPA voucher books, including the reason for the increased demand. The Department's contact details appear at the end of these guidelines. If however, you get voucher books through a "regional council" or other central distribution point within your organisation then you should notify the relevant regional council or central distribution point instead.
- 5.3 In some cases, you may be able to have a number of EAPA voucher books transferred from a neighbouring EAPA Provider. In these cases, the EAPA Provider transferring the EAPA books must: notify the Department of the number of EAPA books they transferred (including the EAPA voucher numbers), the date of transfer and the name of the EAPA Provider receiving them.
- 5.4 If you have run out of EAPA vouchers at a time when a person applies for EAPA, advise the customer to contact their energy retailer or contact the retailer (with the customer's permission) to advise that the customer is waiting for an EAPA assessment to be completed. The retailer cannot disconnect the customer while EAPA is being assessed. In the meantime, you should refer the customer to a neighbouring EAPA Provider. An up-to-date list is available at www.trade.nsw.gov.au/energy/customers

LOST OR STOLEN VOUCHERS

If vouchers are lost or stolen, notify the Department by telephone immediately followed by written confirmation as soon as possible. In the case of theft, also contact the police. The Department will notify the retailers and request them not to apply the value of these vouchers to customers' bills and to notify us of any attempts to use them.

6. Unused Vouchers

- 6.1 Voucher books are only valid for issue from 1 July to 30 June for the relevant financial year as printed on each voucher.
- 6.2 All unused vouchers are to be stored in a secure location and a record of the voucher numbers stored separately from the vouchers.
- 6.3 EAPA Providers must return any unused books to the Department within 30 days after the end of the financial year i.e. by 30 July. For partially used EAPA books, the voucher book cover (completed where possible) and the unused stubs and vouchers should be returned to the Department.

7. Storage Requirements

- 7.1 Original or electronic copies of the following must be stored by your organisation for two years from the date of assessment:
 - voucher stubs; and
 - completed Assessment Forms including related information on customers' files
- 7.2 All unused vouchers are to be stored in a secure location and a record of the voucher numbers stored separately from the vouchers.
- 7.3 EAPA stamps should also be stored securely and separately from unused vouchers.

8. Other forms of Assistance

EAPA is intended as a short term emergency measure. At the time the customer is assessed for EAPA, the customer should also be helped to consider more sustainable measures to improve his or her ability to pay future energy bills (such as by reducing energy consumption and changing their energy usage patterns where appropriate).

This is also the time to help them consider whether they are taking advantage of any NSW Government energy rebates, financial counselling or other programs that might be relevant. For more information, refer to the NSW Government's Energy Assistance Guide available at www.trade.nsw.gov.au/energy/customers the 'Cut your Power Bills' website available at www.cutyourpowerbills.nsw.gov.au or call the Energy Information Line on 1300 136 888.

9. EAPA Provider Obligations

In addition to assessing customers and processing vouchers in accordance with these guidelines, EAPA Providers must also:

- appoint a competent manager who is responsible for ensuring that these guidelines are met and that these guidelines take precedence where there is any inconsistency between these guidelines and any internal policies of the EAPA Provider;
- ensure that all staff members, whether paid or volunteers, are made aware of these guidelines and the need to follow them strictly, particularly with regard to the prohibition on issuing EAPA vouchers to themselves, their friends or relatives;
- ensure that the manager and staff participate in any EAPA training required by the Department;
- contact the Department immediately if fraudulent use of vouchers is suspected. The Department will track the use of the vouchers and may refer the suspected fraud to the police and/or the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC);

- ensure the protection of customer privacy and confidentiality in accordance with all legal requirements;
- fully cooperate with the Department in any investigation or audit it wishes to carry out to ensure compliance with these guidelines;
- maintain appropriate complaints handling policy and procedure, and upon request, submit it to the Department for approval; and
- maintain adequate records of Assessment Forms for a period of at least two years from the date of assessment, to enable audits by the Department.

Contacts

❖ **NSW Trade & Investment, Division of Resources & Energy**

For EAPA related communications:

NSW Trade & Investment, Division of Resources & Energy

Attn: EAPA Scheme

Phone: 1300 729 867

Email: eapa.info@industry.nsw.gov.au

Postal address: GPO Box 3889, SYDNEY NSW 2001

❖ **Energy and Water Ombudsman New South Wales (EWON)**

Refer customers who are in dispute with their retailer.

Free call: 1800 246 545. Mobile phone users: Calls from a mobile phone may attract a fee. If you are calling from a mobile phone let EWON know and they will call you back.

Website: www.ewon.com.au

Email: omb@ewon.com.au

Interpreter service: 131 450

National Relay Service: 133 677

❖ **Retailers**

See the 'My energy offers' website at www.myenergyoffers.nsw.gov.au/

❖ **Other useful contact numbers**

See Energy Assistance Guide and related Fact Sheets available at www.trade.nsw.gov.au/energy/customers

T: 1300 729 867



EAPA Assessment Form

To be completed when any EAPA vouchers are provided

Customer Name:		Date:	
Customer Address:			
Energy Retailer:		Energy Account No:	
Total bill amount:	\$	Amount of EAPA issued:	\$
EAPA voucher numbers: <i>(e.g. Y225501-Y225220inc.)</i>			

Please tick all that apply

1	The customer being assessed is not you, a relative or a friend.		
2	An original or duplicate copy of the current energy bill has been sighted (if the household is connected to both electricity and natural gas, both current bills should be presented, as the EAPA limits apply to each household).		
3	The customer's name appears on the original or duplicate copy of the bill.		
4	The supply address on the bill is the customer's current address.		
5	The bill is for a residential electricity or natural gas account.		
6	The customer is experiencing financial hardship. Details of the customer's circumstances have been noted below:		
7	The customer has demonstrated that they are denying basic needs OR do not have enough money to pay their energy bill and as a result of which, they may face disconnection, or have been disconnected.		
8	Reasonable attempts have been made to contact the customer's energy retailer to check ALL of the following: a) other assistance options have been explored such as payment plans, Centrepay, extensions of time to pay or support through the retailer's hardship program; b) the customer is receiving all energy rebates they are entitled to; c) updated balance and breakdown of charges; and d) details of any EAPA received during the current financial year.		
9	Did you speak with the energy retailer? If not, how much time did you have to spend waiting to speak to the energy retailer?	Y	N

Please tick or circle all that apply

10	Is this assistance over the EAPA limits in the guidelines e.g. \$250 per bill or \$500 in the current financial year, or more than twice in the current financial year? If you circle Y (for yes), detail why you exceeded these limits below:	Y	N
11	The customer agrees to the privacy notice (printed on the back of each EAPA voucher).		
12	The bill has been stamped with the EAPA stamp, all details filled in (or hand written) and all EAPA vouchers have been filled in and stamped with your organisation's stamp.		
13	The customer has been advised of the voucher validity period and understands where and how vouchers can be processed.		
14	This Assessment Form will be retained for a period of two years from the date of assessment.		

EAPA Provider Full Name (please print):	
EAPA Provider Signature:	
Conference Name:	
Regional Council:	
Central Council/Diocese:	



NSW ENERGY RETAILER HARDSHIP CONTACT LIST
(current as at 22 June 2015)

All retailers noted on pages 1 and 2 (only), have made arrangements with Australia Post outlets for EAPA vouchers to be processed over their counters. If this does not suit the customer, EAPA vouchers can still be mailed to the respective retailer's address as noted on this list.

Energy Retailer	Dedicated Community Welfare Organisation (CWO) #	Hardship Unit Name & Number	General Enquiries #	Mailing address for EAPA vouchers	Manager of Hardship Unit
ActewAGL**Not AGL electricity customers	# Not applicable	Staying Connected Program 1300 138 574	131 493	ActewAGL GPO Box 366 CANBERRA ACT 2601	Kirsty Greenwood; Fiona Maher – 02 6248 3874
		Mon – Fri 8am – 6pm			
AGL	# Not applicable	Staying Connected Program 1300 659 925	131 245	AGL Retail Energy Locked Bag 14120 MCMC MELBOURNE VIC 3001	Emma Rocca
		Mon - Fri 8am – 5pm	Mon - Fri 8am – 6pm		
<i>If your client is <u>not</u> currently in the AGL Staying Connected Program, please contact the General Enquiries number for assistance</i>					
Energy Australia (ex Ausgrid)*	1800 558 643			Energy Australia Energy Assist Team Locked Bag 14060 MELBOURNE CITY MAIL CENTRE 8001	Briar Hall, EnergyAssist Program Manager, EnergyAustralia Level 2, 525 Flinders Street, Melbourne Victoria 3000 Briar.Hall@energyaustralia.com.au
	Mon – Fri 8am – 6pm	Mon – Fri 8:30am – 4:30pm	Mon - Fri 8am – 6pm		

**You will be able to recognise the Energy Australia bill as an ex-Ausgrid account, by the 9 digit EnergyAustralia account number. Please telephone the dedicated CWO telephone number. If it is not available, contact the Hardship Unit number when available.*



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Energy Retailer	Dedicated CWO #	Hardship Unit Name & Number	General Enquiries #	Mailing address for EAPA vouchers	Manager of Hardship Unit
Origin Energy	Community Liaison 1800 626 320	Poweron Program # Not applicable	132 461	Origin Energy Retail Ltd Locked Bag 304 SILVERWATER NSW 1811	Deb Thomas Alex Newton
	Mon - Fri 8.30am – 5pm		Mon - Fri 8am – 9pm		
		Mon - Fri 8am – 5pm	Mon - Fri 8.30am – 6.30pm		
<i>If your client is <u>not</u> currently in the Poweron Program, please contact the General Enquiries number for assistance</i>					
Lumo Energy	# Not applicable	EASE Program 1800 989 321 Mon – Fri 8.30am – 5pm	1300 115 866 M – F 8am – 8pm Sat 8am – 5pm	Lumo Energy Attention: Hardship Team PO Box 632 COLLINS ST WEST VICE 8007	Clara De Mercurio
Simply Energy	# Not applicable	Bill Assist 1800 094 121	13 88 08	Simply Energy GPO Box 367 MELBOURNE VIC 3001	Brooke Suter
		Mon – Fri 8:30am – 5:30pm	Mon – Fri 8am – 7pm		

It is best to call the dedicated CWO number. If it is not available, contact the Hardship Unit number where available



NSW ENERGY RETAILER HARDSHIP CONTACT LIST
(current as at 22 June 2015)

The retailers noted on this page (pages 3, 4 & 5 only), **DO NOT** have arrangements set up with Australia Post for EAPA voucher processing. EAPA vouchers provided to customers with a bill issued by any of the below mentioned retailers **MUST BE MAILED** to the corresponding address, as noted on this list.

Energy Retailer	Dedicated CWO #	Hardship Unit Name & Number	General Enquiries #	Mailing address for EAPA vouchers	Manager of Hardship Unit
Click Energy	# Not Applicable	1300 307 758	1800 775 929	Click Energy Pty Ltd PO Box 1048 COLLINGWOOD VIC 3066	Bianca Thompson
		Mon – Fri 9am – 5pm	Mon – Fri 8am – 6pm		
Diamond Energy	# Not Applicable	# Not Applicable	1300 838 009	Diamond Energy Attn: Stephen White Level 1, 695 Bourke Road CAMPBERWELL VIC 3124	Stephen White
			Mon – Fri 8.30am – 6pm		
Dodo Power & Gas	# Not Applicable	Hardship Program 1300 374 733	1300 374 757	DPG Customer Care PO Box 631 COLLINS ST WEST VIC 8007	Lisa Ball
		Mon – Fri 8am – 7pm			
Ergon Energy	# Not Applicable	Customer Assist 1800 670 352	13 10 46	Chris Samuelsson Ergon Energy Retail PO Box 308 ROCKHAMPTON QLD 4700	Chris Samuelsson
		Mon – Fri 8am – 5pm	Mon – Fri 7am – 6.30pm		

Information about Click Energy:

‘There is a section on Click Energy’s website: <https://www.clickenergy.com.au/nsw-eapa-vouchers/> dedicated to EAPA vouchers. This details that if a customer has EAPA vouchers, to give them a call and they will post the customer a prepaid envelope so there is no additional cost to the customer. This link is at the bottom of Click Energy’s website: <https://www.clickenergy.com.au/> underneath “Contact Us” titled NSW EAPA Vouchers’.

It is best to call the dedicated CWO number. If it is not available, contact the Hardship Unit number where available

What's your assessment?

The chart indicates broadly the ways in which you might need to help your client. Your organisation may of course have its own procedures. The key point is that the level and kind of assistance a client needs will depend on the urgency of their situation.

(References are to the *Energy Assistance Guide*.)

VERY URGENT

Your client has already been disconnected

- Go to Section 4 *Dealing with disconnection and reconnection*.

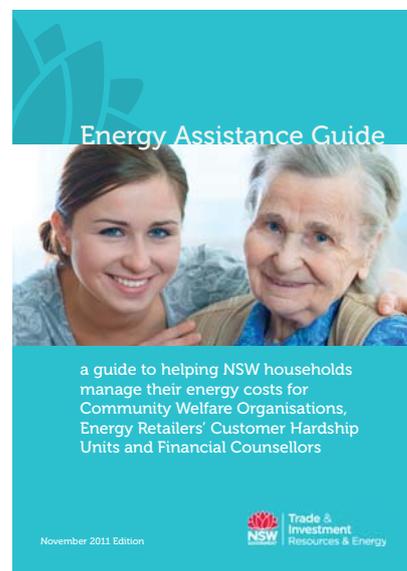
Your client is at risk of being disconnected or is having serious difficulty paying their energy bills

- Contact the energy retailer. See Appendix A for contact details of the retailer.
 - Tell the retailer that your client is having difficulties paying their bills.
 - If you are in the process of assessing your client for EAPA vouchers let the retailer know (with the client's permission). See Section 6 *Getting financial assistance*.
 - Help your client negotiate with the retailer to (a) set up a long-term payment plan or (b) sign up for Centrepay. (Your client is eligible for Centrepay only if they already receive a government benefit or concession.) See Section 5 *Finding easier payment options*.
 - Ask the retailer if there is any other assistance available to your client through the retailer's hardship program.
- Check if your client is likely to meet the EAPA eligibility criteria. If they are, arrange for an assessment. See Section 6 *Getting financial assistance*.
- Refer your client to a financial counsellor (see page 54) who can assess their financial situation thoroughly and offer advice. A financial counsellor can, for example, help calculate a long-term payment plan that's affordable.
- Use any sections of this Guide relevant to your client's situation to offer them suitable advice.

Your client is not likely to be disconnected but still needs help paying their bills and managing their energy usage

- Advise of special payment options. For details, see Section 5 *Finding easier payment options*.
- Advise of rebates that may apply. For details, see Section 6 *Getting financial assistance*.
- Advise of ways to manage energy use. For details, see Section 8 *Reducing energy costs*.

LESS URGENT



FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Visit our website: www.energy.nsw.gov.au
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- Contact the Energy Info Line on 1300 136 888
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Disconnection and reconnection

Energy is an essential service and disconnection is the last alternative. This fact sheet describes the circumstances in which an energy retailer may disconnect your energy supply. It explains the rules and procedures the retailer must (by law) follow. And it explains – if you *have* been disconnected – how to get reconnected as quickly as possible.

Disconnection

Why might your energy supply be disconnected?

There are several reasons why an energy retailer may decide to disconnect your energy supply. The main reasons are:

- you have not paid, or made arrangements to pay, an overdue amount on your bill
- you have not paid, or made arrangements to pay, the security deposit on a new account
- you are on a payment plan but have not made the agreed payments
- it has not been possible for someone to enter your property to read the meter.

What are the rules for disconnection?

Retailers are not allowed to disconnect your energy supply without meeting certain requirements and without warning. There are strict rules and procedures governing disconnection. Here are some of the main ones.

Before retailers are allowed to disconnect you, they must...

- make a reasonable attempt to notify you in advance that they are intending to disconnect your energy supply
- give you the option to go on a payment plan
- advise you that government-funded assistance (such as Energy Accounts Payment Assistance, or EAPA) is available.

Retailers are *not* allowed to disconnect you if...

- it is a Friday, Saturday or Sunday
- it is a public holiday, the day before a public holiday, or the days between 20 December and 31 December
- it is before 8am or after 3pm on any day
- you have notified them that someone in your house uses life support equipment requiring electricity
- you have told them you have an appointment with a Community Welfare Organisation (CWO) to discuss EAPA assistance.

- you have lodged a complaint relating to the disconnection with the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) or your retailer that the complaint has not been resolved
- your outstanding amount is less than \$300 and you have agreed to repay the amount.

Reconnection

If your energy supply has been disconnected...

- contact your energy retailer immediately and discuss how to get reconnected as soon as possible - usually this involves paying some money towards your account or agreeing to a payment plan.

If you need help making an immediate payment towards your account...

- contact a CWO and ask if you are eligible for EAPA vouchers. A list of participating CWOs is available on our website at www.energy.nsw.gov.au/customers/help

If you want help negotiating a realistic payment plan...

- contact EWON.

Energy & Water Ombudsman (EWON)

Office hours are 9am–5pm, Monday to Friday

freecall	1800 246 545*
freefax	1800 812 291
freepost	Reply Paid K1343 Haymarket NSW 1239
email	omb@ewon.com.au
website	www.ewon.com.au
interpreter services	131 450
national relay service	133 677

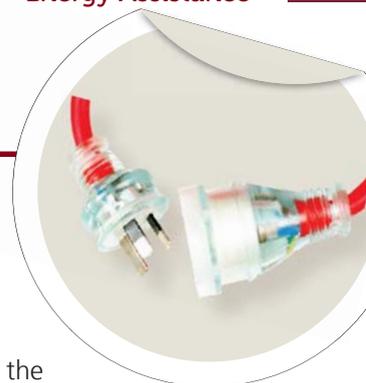
*Calls from mobile phones may attract a fee, which will vary depending on the service provider. If you are calling from a mobile phone, let EWON know and they will call back.

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Disputes and complaints

If you have a dispute with your energy retailer, this fact sheet explains the best way to try to resolve it. In general:

- try to resolve matters directly with your retailer first
- if that doesn't work and you have exhausted all options with the retailer, contact the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) for assistance or to make a complaint. EWON's services are free to consumers.

Resolving a dispute with the retailer

(internal dispute resolution)

Step 1. Contact your retailer

- explain the problem and the background or history
- ask how they can help and what they intend to do
- write down the name of the person you spoke to, the date and time of the call and what you discussed and agreed on.

If the matter is complicated and not urgent, it might be easier to explain it in a letter. Keep copies of any letters you send.

If the person you spoke to can't help, go to Step 2.

Step 2. Ask to speak to a supervisor, manager, or the Customer Hardship Unit

- discuss what options are available
- write down the name of the person you spoke to, the date and time of the call and what you discussed and agreed on.

If you are still not satisfied, explain that you will have to take the matter to EWON for external dispute resolution.

Resolving a dispute with EWON's assistance

(external dispute resolution)

Contact EWON by phone, online, or in person

You will need to explain what the problem is and what has been discussed between you and the retailer.

EWON may:

- arrange for a senior person at the retailer to contact you
- investigate the circumstances that led to the dispute
- try to negotiate a settlement between you and your retailer.

Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON)

Office hours are 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday

EWON can investigate disputes about such things as:

- disputed accounts
- high bills, debts, arrears
- disconnection or restriction of supply
- reliability of supply
- quality of supply (including claims for compensation)
- connection or transfer issues
- negotiated contracts
- marketing practices
- poor customer service.

freecall	1800 246 545 (if calling from a mobile phone, let EWON know and they will call back)
freefax	1800 812 291
freepost	Reply Paid K1343 Haymarket NSW 1239
email	omb@ewon.com.au
website	www.ewon.com.au (you can make a complaint online)
interpreter services	131 450
national relay service	133 677
by appointment (ring freecall 1800 246 545 to make an appointment)	Level 10, 323 Castlereagh Street Sydney

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Getting help with your finances and energy bills

There are several sources of assistance available if you are having trouble paying your energy bills or your finances in general. For more information call the Energy Information Line on 1300 136 888 or visit www.energy.nsw.gov.au

NSW Government Rebates			
	Who is it for?	How will it help?	How to apply?
NSW Low Income Household Rebate	Account holders who have one of these cards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pensioner Concession Card ■ Gold Card (marked with War Widow or War Widower Pension or Totally and Permanently Incapacitated or Disability Pension) ■ Health Care Card. This includes long term residents of caravan parks and also residents of retirement villages.	\$225 a year, credited in quarterly amounts on electricity bills. Eligible residents of retirement villages will receive one, annual payment. This will rise to \$235 in 2014-2015. Customers eligible for both the Family Energy Rebate and the Low Income Household Rebate can receive a total payment of \$250.	Contact your energy retailer. You'll need to give your concession card number. If you live in a caravan or mobile home park, ask for a form from your park operator, or either Origin Energy or EnergyAustralia. If you live in a retirement village and receive electricity bills from the village operator, forms are available from: www.energy.nsw.gov.au/customers/rebates
NSW Family Energy Rebate	NSW family households eligible for and in receipt of the federal government's Family Tax Benefit A or B. Applicant's name must be on electricity bills, including residents of caravan or mobile home parks.	One, annual payment on electricity bills. \$125 in 2013-2014. \$150 in 2014-2015. Or \$250 if eligible for both the Family Energy Rebate and the Low Income Household Rebate.	Complete an online form from our website, or download a form from our website, Forms are available from: www.trade.nsw.gov.au/energy/customers/rebates/family-energy-rebate
NSW Medical Energy Rebate	People who cannot self-regulate body temperature (a condition sometimes associated with Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, etc.) AND the account holder has one of these cards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pensioner Concession Card ■ Gold Card ■ Health Care Card. This includes long term residents of caravan parks.	\$225 a year in 2013-2014, credited in quarterly amounts on electricity bills. This will rise to \$235 in 2014-2015.	Contact your energy retailer. Your doctor will also need to sign the application form. Further information can be found on our website at www.energy.nsw.gov.au/customers/rebates
NSW Life Support Rebate	People who use certain approved medical equipment at home that is necessary to sustain life (or have someone living in their house who uses this equipment) e.g. home dialysis. This includes long term residents of caravan parks.	\$20 – \$600 a year (depends on equipment and its usage), credited in quarterly amounts on electricity bills.	Contact your energy retailer. Your doctor will also need to sign the application form. Further information can be found on our website at www.energy.nsw.gov.au/customers/rebates

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Emergency assistance			
	Who is it for?	How will it help?	How to apply?
NSW Energy Accounts Payment Assistance scheme (EAPA)	Households struggling to pay their energy bills due to a crisis or emergency situation.	EAPA vouchers provide part-payment of electricity and natural gas bills.	Make an appointment with a participating Community Welfare Organisation (CWO). The CWO will then assess your situation for eligibility for EAPA vouchers.
Emergency Relief Program from the Federal Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA)	Funding is allocated to participating community and charitable organisations to provide to people in financial crisis.	It includes food, transport or chemist vouchers, part-payment of outstanding accounts (e.g. rent or utilities), budgeting assistance and referrals to services to help address underlying causes of financial crisis.	Visit the FaHCSIA website at www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/communities/progserv/Pages/EmergencyReliefProgram.aspx
Budgeting and debt management			
	Who is it for?	How will it help?	How to apply?
Financial counselling	People who are experiencing financial difficulties.	Financial counsellors provide free support and education to empower and assist people to gain control of their financial situation.	Contact the Financial Counsellors' Association of NSW (FCAN). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Phone: 1300 914 408 ■ www.fcan.com.au/
Credit and Debt Hotline	Low income and disadvantaged consumers who are struggling with credit, banking and debt recovery issues.	Consumer Credit Legal Centre (NSW) Inc. is a community legal centre specialising in financial services, particularly matters and policy issues related to consumer credit, banking and debt recovery.	Contact the Consumer Credit Legal Centre (CCLC). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Phone: 1800 007 007 ■ www.cclcnsw.org.au/
Easier payment options			
	Who is it for?	How will it help?	How to apply?
Flexible payment options	Households experiencing financial difficulties and having trouble paying their energy bills	There are various options including extensions of time and payment plans.	Contact your energy retailer.
Centrepay	People who receive regular pension or income support payments from Centrelink.	Automates regular small payments from your Centrelink allowance to your energy account to keep you in control of your bills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contact your energy retailer, or ■ www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/services/centrepay.htm
Upgrading appliances			
No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS)	Households who need help to buy essential household services and goods, including whitegoods and medical appliances.	Loans can be used to purchase necessary household services, avoiding the trap of maintaining unreliable second-hand appliances. Loans are generally repaid over 12 to 18 months.	Contact the NILS Service Operator. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Phone: 1800 509 994, or ■ www.nilnsnsw.org.au/
Fridge removal ('buy-back')	Households that have a working second fridge.	A free collection service will take away an old second fridge (provided it still works) and pay up to \$35 for it (subject to certain conditions).	Contact your local council for details.

For further information and assistance call the Energy Information Line on 1300 136 888.

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Residential Communities Rebates

For people living in caravan and mobile home parks

From 1 July 2014 The Department of Trade and Investment will be providing energy rebates (Low Income Household Rebate, Medical Energy Rebate, Life Support Rebate and Family Energy Rebate) to eligible households in residential communities (caravan/mobile home parks).

People who live in residential communities and who are supplied electricity by the operator of the residential community may be eligible to receive the Family Energy Rebate, the Low Income Household Rebate, the Life Support Rebate and the Medical Energy Rebate.

If your household receives an electricity bill from the operator of a residential community, then the following information applies to you.

Rebates	2014 - 2015
Low Income Household Rebate (LIHR)	\$258.50
Life Support Rebate	Equipment rates
Medical Energy Rebate	\$258.50
Family Energy Rebate (FER)	\$165
CAP Option	\$275
FER & LIHR	FER \$16.50 + LIHR \$258.50

Low Income Household Rebate

You may be eligible to receive the Low Income Household Rebate as a single payment, once per household, each financial year.

To be eligible for the Low Income Household Rebate, you need to:

- Be a NSW resident; and
- Be a long term resident of a residential community (caravan or mobile home park); and
- Your name must be on the electricity account issued to you by the operator of your residential community as your principal place of residence; and

You must hold one of the following cards:

- A Pensioner Concession Card from the Department of Human Services (formerly Centrelink) or the Department of Veterans' Affairs; or
- A Health Care Card from the Department of Human Services; or
- Gold Cards from the Department of Veterans' Affairs marked with:
 - Totally and Permanently Incapacitated or
 - Disability Pension or
 - War Widow or War Widower Pension

Eligible applicants will receive \$258.50 as a single payment for the 2014 - 2015 financial year.

You will need to submit a new, signed application form every year to the Department. This is to ensure that the Rebate is only provided to eligible customers.

If you are billed for electricity by an authorised retailer you must submit your completed application form to your retailer.

Life Support Rebate

To apply for the Life Support Rebate you will need to fill in the Life Support Rebate Application Form, have it signed by your doctor to confirm that you require the equipment, and send the completed form back to the Department (if you live in a residential community).

The amount of the rebate varies depending on the type of machine used by the customer. The list of approved [Life Support Equipment](#) includes medical equipment that is essential for supporting life such as home dialysis, ventilators and oxygen concentrators.

You will need to submit a new, signed application form every two years to the Department. This is to ensure that the Rebate is only provided to eligible customers.

If you are billed for electricity by an authorised retailer you must submit your completed application form to your retailer.

Medical Energy Rebate

This rebate is for customers who have an inability to self-regulate body temperature when exposed to extremes (hot or cold) of environmental temperatures. It is associated with certain medical conditions such as Parkinson's disease and Multiple Sclerosis. However, to be eligible for the Rebate a customer will require a separate diagnosis that they are unable to self-regulate their body temperature.

To be eligible for the Medical Energy Rebate you need to:

- be resident in New South Wales; and
- be a customer of the retail supplier, or a long term resident of a residential community; and
- Your name must appear on the electricity account issued to you by the operator of your residential community as your principal place of residence; and
- You or anyone residing at the residence must have an inability to self-regulate body temperature. A medical practitioner must confirm that you or anyone residing at your premises meets one of the primary qualifying conditions and one of the secondary qualifying conditions. These qualifying conditions are detailed further below; and

You must hold one of the following cards:

- Pensioner Concession Card issued by the DHS/DVA; or
- DHS Health Care Card; or
- DVA Gold Card.

Your treating doctor of at least three months must certify your inability to self-regulate body temperature and complete an application form (if you are treated by the Royal Flying Doctor Service, the same doctor is not necessarily required to have treated you for three consecutive

months). Your doctor must confirm at least one of the [Primary Qualifying Conditions](#) and one of the [Secondary Qualifying Conditions](#) are met in order to be eligible for the Rebate.

Eligible applicants will receive \$258.50 as a single payment for the 2014 - 2015 financial year.

If you live in a residential community your completed Medical Energy Rebate form should be submitted to the Department.

If you are billed for electricity by an authorised retailer you must submit your completed application form to your retailer.

Family Energy Rebate

To be eligible for the 2014-2015 NSW Family Energy Rebate, you must:

- Be a NSW resident; **and**
- Be eligible for the Federal Government's Family Tax Benefit A or B at any time during the 2013-2014 financial year, and have received a relevant payment; **and**
- Be an account holder of an electricity retailer, **or** a long-term resident of a residential community (caravan or mobile home park) whose name appears on the electricity account for supply to her/his principal place of residence.

If you are eligible to receive an annual Family Energy Rebate you will receive the following support during these financial years:

2013-2014	2014 - 2015
\$137.50	\$165

As a resident of a residential community, your rebate amount includes reimbursement for the 10% Goods and Services Tax (GST) component of the electricity bill you receive from the park operator.

Your rebate will be paid directly to your nominated bank account as an electronic funds transfer by the Department before the end of each financial year.

How are the rebates paid to the customer?

For eligible customers in residential communities, the electricity rebates will be paid directly by the Department into the bank account nominated by you on your application form.

The rebate payment includes reimbursement of a 10% Goods and Services Tax (GST) component of the electricity bill provided to you by the operator of the residential community.

For further information on NSW Government energy rebates go to www.resourcesandenergy.nsw.gov.au/energy-consumers/financial-assistance/rebates



Energy Blackout Compensation

Electricity customers in metropolitan areas can receive \$80 in compensation from their energy supplier if they suffer more than four, 4-hour outages in a year, or any outage of longer than 12 hours.

Non-metropolitan customers can receive \$80 from their energy supplier if they suffer more than four, 5-hour outages in a year, or any outage of longer than 18 hours. The rebates are capped at \$320 a year.

An outage resulting from the following causes does not qualify:

- a shortfall of generation, a failure on the high voltage transmission network or following a request or direction from an emergency services organisation;
- a planned interruption (eg for maintenance work);
- an outage caused by a natural disaster, or severe thunderstorm or weather (defined standards are used); or
- an outage caused by third parties, such as a vehicle accident or vandalism.

For information or clarification please contact:

Your electricity retailer or your local electricity distributor.



Key Energy Efficiency Tips

Shop around for energy retailers

Visit the Energy Made Easy website (<http://www.energymadeeasy.gov.au/>) of the Australian government to compare energy and gas prices in your area.

Shift your electricity usage patterns

If you have a time of use meter, consider changing your energy consumption patterns to consume more energy during off peak hours. For example, do your washing loads at night and confine electric air conditioning and heating to pre-dawn and post dusk as much as possible.

Heating and air conditioning

- If using electric heating and air-conditioning, ensure your home is properly insulated and all gaps around windows and doors are sealed. Also consider the use of blackout curtains as windows are major point of heat loss during winter and heat gain over summer.
- Only use your air conditioning on exceptionally hot or cold days. Don't leave it on all the time.
- Install a ceiling fan with a reversible direction function. During winter, set it to spin the opposite way it does over summer, which will push heat down.
- Roof turbines (whirlygigs) can decrease the temperature of your roof space during summer, which will decrease the temperature of the rooms, particularly if your roof isn't insulated. In winters they benefit by reducing moisture in the roof area which can affect the performance of insulation.
- Keep the doors shut to rooms that don't require heating or cooling.
- Appliances with thermostats are more economical than those without.
- When buying appliances the more stars the better for energy efficiency.
- Regularly service your heating and cooling system to ensure maximum efficiency.

Hot water

- Consider a heater blanket if you have an electric hot water system – these are very cheap to buy.
- Cover all exposed pipes in insulation lagging to minimize heat loss.
- Use shower timers to encourage shorter showers.
- If possible, replace your hot water system with gas or solar hot water system.

Laundry

- Line drying is preferable to electric clothes dryers. If using dryers, ensure the lint filter is free of buildup and there is plenty of air circulation around the dryer. Open a window if possible while using the dryer to allow humidity to escape & help your clothes to dry faster.
- Use cold water wash in your washing machine. Also consider using eco-options on your washing machine



Kitchen

- When using an electric stovetop, use correctly sized cookware. A pot or pan that doesn't entirely cover the element will result in major heat waste, and food taking longer to cook.
- Cover pots and pans with a lid to build up heat faster and speed up the cooking.
- When boiling water, use your kettle or microwave instead of on an electric stovetop hot plate.
- Use your microwave wherever possible as it will use 1/3rd of energy consumed by a stove.
- Do not open the electric oven often to check on your food. Ensure your electric oven light is working and the glass panel is always clean so the food inside is visible.
- Switch off the electric stove or oven just before your food is done, as there will be enough residual heat to complete the cooking.
- When boiling water, only add as much water as you need
- Ensure the seal of your refrigerator is in good condition. Locate your fridge out of direct sunlight with good air circulation all around. Dust the coils at the back of old fridges regularly to improve performance.
- Regularly defrost your fridge and freezer. Adjust the settings of your appliances to match the season. In winter you can set your fridge and freezer to a much higher (warmer) setting.
- Switch appliances off at the wall rather than just on the appliance when you're finished using them.

Lighting

- Only use lighting when you need it and switch them off when you leave a room.
- Switch to CFL or LED lighting which require much less electricity to operate.
- For garden lighting, switch to solar lamps – they have an internal battery and do not require wiring.
- Instead of having security lights on all night, use sensor lights that switch only when on when someone is in the immediate vicinity.

Computers and Televisions

- Switching from a desktop computer to a laptop can save over 50% of your computing related electricity consumption.
- Turn off your computer at the wall when not in use or recharging as this will eliminate standby power consumption.
- Set your screen brightness as low as possible without it straining your eyes. The brighter the screen is, the more power it consumes.
- If you use a screen saver, set it to just a blank screen. Animated screen savers are processor intensive, which consumes more electricity.
- Turn off your television when you aren't watching it. Leaving a TV on all day is very expensive.

Recharging gadgets

- Once a phone or other portable device is charged, it continues to draw power while plugged in at the socket. Make sure it's switched off at the wall when charging is complete.

Reference: www.energy.gov/ and www.energymadeeasy.gov.au/