

Energy Saving Ideas

Most domestic energy consumption goes on heating and cooling (60%) and hot water (20%), followed by cooking and general appliances, and lighting.

Energy use in the ACT is influenced by the extremes of our climate. For instance, more energy is used in the colder months than in summer for heating and hot water. Energy use for cooking, appliances and lighting is fairly constant throughout the year.

So by understanding the impact of seasonal variations and developing energy efficient habits, you can minimise energy consumption and save money. For instance:

In the cooler months –

- insulate ceilings and where possible, walls and floors
- avoid overheating rooms (high temperatures increase costs)
- close off areas being heated and avoid heating areas not being used
- install curtains and box pelmets.

In the warmer months –

- avoid setting cooler thermostats too low (25°C should be comfortable)
- close off sections of the house not being cooled
- as for heating, install insulation
- use external blinds to stop the sun striking glass on the west and east
- fans are cheap to run.

Save energy all year round –

- check your hot water system for leaks
- switch off the hot water system when going away for long periods
- replace incandescent lights with standard compact fluorescent tubes
- use energy-efficient kitchen appliances like microwave cookers
- install AAA-rated shower heads and wash clothes in cold water
- turn off the TV when no one is watching
- in general, choose high-star rated electrical appliances – the more stars, the more you save.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact the Home

Energy Advice Team (HEAT)

Phone: (02) 6260 6165

Web address: www.heat.net.au

Email: info@heat.net.au

or your electricity retailer.

GreenPower –

All electricity retailers offer customers the choice of purchasing some of their electricity from clean, green, renewable energy sources that don't pollute the environment. Ask energy retailers about your Green Power options.

Where can I get more information about FRC?

For more information on electricity FRC and ways to save energy, visit the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission website at

<http://www.icrc.act.gov.au>

or phone (02) 6205 0799.

- How will FRC be introduced in the ACT?
- Who can supply electricity?
- What do I have to do after 1 July 2003?
- What types of contracts will be available?
- If I enter into a new contract with a retailer, can I change back afterwards to the old arrangements?
- What should I look for if I am considering a new electricity supplier?
- Will the price of electricity change?
- Who will ensure any price increases are fair?

... for answers to these questions and more read the inside of this brochure.

ENGLISH	If you need interpreting help, telephone:
ARABIC	: إتصل برقم الهاتف : إن كنت تحتاج مساعدة في الترجمة الشفوية.
CHINESE	如果你需要传译员的帮助, 请打电话:
CROATIAN	Ako trebate pomoć tumača telefonirajte:
GREEK	Αν χρειάζεστε διερμηνέα τηλεφωνήστε στο
ITALIAN	Se avete bisogno di un interprete, telefonate al numero:
MALTESE	Jekk għandek bżonn l-għajnuna t'interpretu, çempel:
PERSIAN	اگر به ترجمه شفاهی احتیاج دارید به این شماره تلفن کنید:
PORTUGUESE	Se você precisar da ajuda de um intérprete, telefone:
SERBIAN	Ako vam je potrebna pomoć prevodioca telefonirajte:
SPANISH	Si necesita la asistencia de un intérprete, llame al:
TURKISH	Tercümana ihtiyacımız varsa lütfen telefon ediniz:
VIETNAMESE	Nếu bạn cần một người thông-ngôn hãy gọi điện-thoại:

TRANSLATING AND INTERPRETING SERVICE

131 450

Canberra and District - 24 hours a day, seven days a week

INFORMED CHOICE



**Which Electricity Retailer
Is Best For Me?**



ICRC

INDEPENDENT COMPETITION AND REGULATORY COMMISSION

Phone: (02) 6205 0799

Web address: www.icrc.act.gov.au

Full Retail Contestability in electricity will start in the ACT on 1 July 2003.

Full Retail Contestability, or FRC, simply refers to the freedom to choose your electricity retailer. This means you will be able to buy your electricity from your existing retailer (ActewAGL Retail in most cases) or another electricity retailer.

Once FRC starts, the freedom to choose where to buy your electricity will be available to all electricity consumers in the ACT. Larger consumers such as hospitals, universities and large supermarkets are already able to choose their retailer. The remaining groups of customers to have this choice are residential and small business customers.

FRC is already in place in NSW, Victoria and South Australia.

How will FRC be introduced in the ACT?

From 1 July 2003

- there will be a transitional period (to be reviewed after three years) during which ACT consumers will be able, if they wish, to remain with their existing retailer on a regulated electricity tariff
- consumers will also be able to change to one of the other licensed electricity retailers who choose to enter the ACT market.

Who can supply electricity?

Electricity suppliers currently licensed to operate in the ACT include: ActewAGL Retail, Country Energy, Energy Australia, Integral Energy, Origin Energy, AGL, CitiPower, Energex, Ergon Energy, Ferrier Hodgson, Pulse Energy, TXU and Yallourn Energy (AusPower).

What do I have to do after 1 July 2003?

Once FRC starts on 1 July, you will be free to shop around, or retailers may approach you. Either way, you will have a number of options:

- Do nothing — your existing retailer will continue to supply you with electricity on your current arrangements;
OR
- Stay with your existing retailer but negotiate a new deal;
OR
- Shop around to see if you can get a better deal from one of the other electricity retailers who choose to operate in the ACT market.

What types of contracts will be available?

If you choose to remain with your existing retailer after 1 July, you will continue to be supplied by them under the standard customer contract currently in force. If you change retailers or negotiate a new deal with your existing retailer, you will have to sign a new customer contract.

If I enter into a new contract with a retailer, can I change back afterwards to the old arrangements?

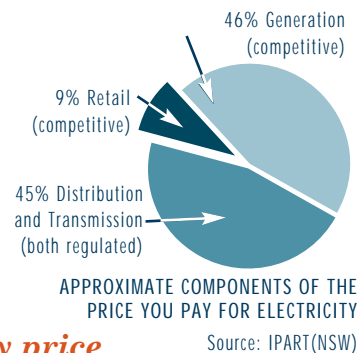
Yes, at least during the three-year FRC transitional period. At the conclusion of any new contract arrangement you might have entered into, it will still be possible to return to a standard customer contract, regulated by the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission (ICRC) and offered by ActewAGL Retail.

What should I look for if I am considering a new electricity supplier?

You will have to look carefully at what electricity retailers are offering you in a contract to see whether you will be better off. Some of the things to look for are price, payment methods, termination fees and any other charges, environmental impact of their energy product, and services such as advice on how to save energy and discounts on energy saving products. A cooling-off period may also apply before a contract properly begins, especially if it results from a door-to-door sale.

Will the price of electricity change?

It might – at least in the short term – but principally because of factors not related to the introduction of FRC, such as changing power generation costs.



Who will ensure any price increases are fair?

The ICRC will continue to set distribution charges and the regulated tariff for the ACT. (Transmission charges are regulated by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission).

Will the quality or reliability of my power supply change?

No. The quality and reliability of your power supply will remain the same, regardless of which electricity retailer you choose. If you experience any supply problems, call ActewAGL Distribution (the company responsible for operating and maintaining the electricity network) on 13 10 93.

What happens if I'm renting?

If you are paying for the electricity you use in the premises you are renting, then you have the right to choose the electricity retailer for that property. An electricity contract is normally with a person at a particular premises. Keep in mind that some contracts might include an 'early termination' penalty.

If I change my electricity retailer, will I have to get a new meter?

No – your electricity use will continue to be measured by your existing meter and you will only pay for the electricity consumed via that meter.

Can I still get an electricity concession, like a pensioner rebate?

Concessions will continue to be available to consumers who qualify, such as those holding a current Centrelink Pension Concession Card, Centrelink Health Care Card, Veterans' Affairs Pension or Gold Card, or are dependent on life support equipment, regardless of which electricity retailer they are with.

What happens if my retailer is unable to continue to supply electricity?

In the event that a retailer ceases (either permanently or temporarily) to be lawfully able to supply electricity to customers, special legal arrangements have been put in place to ensure supply by a so-called "retailer of last resort", which in the ACT is ActewAGL Retail.

What protection is there for consumers?

You are protected by ACT consumer protection legislation, including the *Fair Trading (Consumer Affairs) Act 1973* and the Consumer Protection Code under the *Utilities Act 2000* (available at www.icrc.act.gov.au), as well as laws relating to the conduct of door-to-door sales and other marketing activities, and cooling-off periods for contracts.

If I think I've been treated unfairly, or have some other complaint, or I can't pay my bill, who do I contact?

First, speak to your electricity retailer – they are required to have processes in place to deal with complaints. It may be possible to come to a mutually acceptable arrangement. If you are still unhappy or under severe financial stress, you can then contact the Essential Services Consumer Council (ESCC) by phoning 6207 7740, sending an email to escc@act.gov.au or writing to PO Box 578, Civic Square ACT 2608.

How can I prepare for FRC in time for 1 July?

You can prepare by following a number of simple steps:

- Look at previous bills to check how much electricity you use;
- Find out how your bill is calculated – for instance, check the fixed and variable charges;
- Consider what payment methods you would prefer, eg direct debit, credit card, via Internet etc;
- Look at ways of saving energy (see the back of this brochure).