

## CONSUMER FACT SHEET

# ACT Retail Electricity (Transparency and Comparability) Code

The ACT Retail Electricity (Transparency and Comparability) Code, which started on 1 October 2021, requires retailers to advertise their electricity plans against a benchmark to make it easier for consumers to compare offers and give their customers tailored information to help them choose the best plan for them.

This fact sheet explains how the code helps you shop around for an electricity plan and what you can expect from electricity retailers.

## Why we made the code

Many ACT electricity customers had told us that they found it difficult and confusing to compare plans and work out what is the best deal for them. The code makes it simpler and faster for you to compare electricity plans and choose the best plan for you.

## New ways retailers now have to help electricity consumers

Under the code, retailers have to make their advertising and direct communications with customers about their plans (like letters and emails) much clearer to help you navigate the market and find the best deal for your circumstances.

The code says that retailers have to:

- compare the annual price of each of their electricity plans to a reference price in their advertising
- give you information about the Australian Government's free Energy Made Easy price comparison website, which helps you compare plans from different retailers
- give you clear, timely and reliable information that will help you choose the best plan for your circumstances.

## Retailers now have to advertise discounts against a common reference price

When a retailer advertises or communicates with you about prices, it has to clearly tell you the percentage difference between the price of its plan and the reference price. The reference price is a benchmark or common reference point to help you compare plans from different retailers. You can be confident that a plan with a larger discount off the reference price will be cheaper than a plan with a smaller discount off the reference price (for an average electricity consumer).

Retailers also have to tell you in their advertising and direct communications:

- the additional percentage value of any discounts that you could get if you meet certain conditions, such as a discount for paying your bills on time
- how much your bill for the year would be if you use an average amount of electricity and meet all the conditions to get all the available discounts.

Retailers also have to tell you in their advertising what the average amount of electricity is so you can see whether your bill might be higher or lower than the total annual price, based on your own electricity use in a year.

Here are two examples of advertisements that show the information that retailers are now required to give you. These are just examples. Actual advertisements can look different from these examples but they should include all the required information.

#### Example 1 (with no conditional discounts)

**Energy Us**

**11% less than reference price**

This offer is based on a customer who consumes 3900 kWh a year on a flat rate tariff in the Ausgrid network. The lowest annual price is \$1301. Your bill will differ based on your actual usage.

#### Example 2 (with conditional discounts)

**Energy Us**

**11% less than reference price**  
plus

Further 3% below the reference price if you always pay on time

This offer is based on a customer who consumes 3900 kWh a year on a flat rate tariff in the Ausgrid network. The lowest annual price when you always pay on time is \$1254. Your bill will differ based on your actual usage.

Source: ACCC examples.

## Am I on the best plan my retailer has for my circumstances

The ACT Code included a requirement on NERL retailers to check whether they have an offer that could save their customers money and to put a written message on their customers' bills inviting them to contact their retailer for more information.

On 31 March 2022, the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) published its Better Bills Guideline. The AER Guideline is similar to the better offer obligation contained in the ACT Code. To avoid confusion, on 21 June 2022 the commission varied the ACT Code, removing the better offer obligation within the ACT Code.

To ensure that consumers in the ACT continue to obtain the benefits of the better offer obligation until the AER Guideline is fully operational, the current transitional better offer arrangements within the ACT Code have been extended to 30 September 2023.

Once the AER Guideline is fully operational, NERL retailers will have to comply with the guideline and the AER will be responsible for guideline compliance.

## Your retailer has to give you clear advice before you sign up to a new electricity plan

The code says that retailers must give you clear and useful information to help you understand and compare plans before you sign up to a new electricity contract. For example, when you contact your retailer to talk about cheaper plans, your retailer must tell you if there are terms or conditions that can affect how much you might pay each year, whether your prices might change over the term of your contract, and whether there is another plan that might be more suitable for you.

## Is there anything else you can do to find a better deal?

Absolutely!

You can go on the Australian Government's free Energy Made Easy website ([energymadeeasy.gov.au](http://energymadeeasy.gov.au)) any time to find out about electricity plans available in your area. You don't need to give any personal details, but you can enter your electricity usage to get a better estimate of how much you will pay under each plan so that you can work out which one will be best for you.

## Tell us about your experiences

We are monitoring how retailers comply with the code. Please contact us if you:

- see an advertisement that doesn't compare the price of the plan against the reference price or that doesn't include the information the retailer must tell you
- think your retailer has not included a message about better plans and the Australian Government's Energy Made Easy website on your bill when it should have
- think your retailer did not give you clear advice when you contacted it to ask about plans.

We would also like to hear from you if you have positive feedback or would like to share your experience.

You can contact us by email at [icrc@act.gov.au](mailto:icrc@act.gov.au) or call us on (02) 62050799.