



## 1. Understanding and managing your bills

**U**nderstanding your energy bills can help you to reduce the power you use and save money.

### Understanding your electricity bill

#### Tariffs

The tariff is how much you pay per kilowatt hour. It varies from provider to provider, depending on your plan and if you have any discounts. It can change according to the time of day and day of the week. For example, electricity prices are usually lower in off peak periods such as nights and weekends. So you can save money by running appliances during off peak times.

#### Average daily use

The average amount of energy you use each day is a figure you will be aiming to reduce. Make note of this figure from bill to bill to see how you are tracking.

#### Same time last year figure

This figure shows the amount of power you used at the same time last year. Use this figure to notice patterns and fluctuations in energy use. For example, energy bills are generally higher in winter with increased lighting and heating costs. If you are a big user of air conditioning, your bills may also be high in summer. Use seasonal information on your bill to set benchmarks and goals for reducing power usage.

#### Indicative greenhouse gas emissions

The indicative greenhouse gas emissions figure is an estimate of the emissions produced based on your consumption. It will vary depending on the power source. If your electricity is partly or wholly derived from renewable sources such as solar, hydro, biogas or wind, this figure will be zero. But most electricity in Australia comes from coal and gas-fired power plants.



## Bill benchmark graph

This graph allows you to compare your energy consumption and greenhouse emissions with other similar businesses. You can use it to track your performance against organisations like your own.

## Supply charges

Supply charges are your provider's fixed daily prices. Shop around for a better deal from other providers or try to negotiate a better deal with your current provider. Or join with other community groups for a bulk purchasing deal.

## Solar feed in tariff

If you have solar panels, the solar feed in tariff shows how much credit you are receiving on your bill for solar electricity fed back into the grid. This rate per kWh varies from state to state and plan to plan (it can vary from 6¢ to 64¢).

## Actual or estimate readings

Check if the reading on your bill is based on an actual reading of the meter or if it's an estimate, especially if you are in a rural area. If the amount looks wrong, go and check the meter yourself.

## Unpacking your gas bill

Many of the same terms and phrases apply to gas bills. However, your gas consumption is measured in megajoules (MJ). If you want to know how much energy particular appliances are using and what this costs, use a 'PowerMate' meter. To get instant feedback on your total consumption in real time – get In-Home Displays (IHDs) that talk directly to your smart meter and display real time electricity consumption. Alternatively, some electricity retailers offer online web portals that you can log into to see your historical usage data.

## Further resources

Check out A Greenhouse Around the Corner website:

[www.agreenhouse.net.au/helpful-resources](http://www.agreenhouse.net.au/helpful-resources)

## Related fact sheets

Fact sheet 13: Energy auditing and using a power meter

Fact sheet 17: Shopping around for better energy deals

Fact sheet 19: Installing solar power

For more fact sheets, go to A Greenhouse Around the Corner website:

[www.agreenhouse.net.au/fact-sheet](http://www.agreenhouse.net.au/fact-sheet)



## CHECK POINTS

- ▶ Locate the last four quarterly bills for a complete picture of your usage over a full year.
- ▶ Check if your centre is responsible for all or part of a bill. If your centre is only responsible for part of the bill, involve others in your energy efficiency plan.
- ▶ Check if your property has any sub-meters that measure individual circuits or appliances.
- ▶ Remember if you are comparing figures between different billing periods that not all billing periods contain the same number of days.
- ▶ Shop around for the best deal.

