

**Until now,
you've had no choice
where you bought
your electricity or gas.**



**Now,
the choice
is yours.**



You're free to choose who supplies your electricity and gas, and select the best deal.

From 1 January 2002, all electricity and gas customers in NSW are free to choose where they buy their energy.

To help you start thinking about the choices being offered, and what's best for you, here are the most frequently asked questions and answers.

Please read the brochure. If there is something you're not sure about, or if you need more information please visit www.nsw.gov.au or call 1300 136 888 – Monday to Friday 8.30am to 7.30pm, Saturday 8.30am to 12.30pm.

Here are your three choices:

Option 1

You can stay with your existing energy company and continue to pay independently regulated prices. You don't have to change. If you do nothing, your service will continue as usual.

Option 2

You can ask your present energy company about any competitive deals they may be offering to retain you as a customer.

Option 3

You can shop around from a list of licensed energy companies. You may be offered a deal that's more attractive.

Whether you decide to change or not, your supply of electricity or gas will continue to be delivered as always.

Frequently asked questions:

Q: "Why am I being given a choice?"

A: Until now the electricity and gas for your household or small business has been supplied by your local company.

You've been supplied at prices regulated by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

That's worked, but it isn't much of a choice for customers.

And because there's been no choice, other suppliers have not been able to offer you a better deal.

Q: "What's happening now?"

A: For the first time, electricity and gas companies are being allowed to compete for your business.

This means you're now free to shop around and choose who supplies your electricity or your gas.

Already, many large businesses have taken advantage of competitive offers for their electricity and gas. Now, households and small businesses can too.

Q: "Do I have to change?"

A: No. If you are happy with your present electricity or gas company, you can stay with them.

To stay where you are, simply *do nothing*. You'll continue to receive your electricity and gas supply at regulated prices, just as you do now.

Q: "Can I 'wait and see' before making a decision?"

A: Yes. The choice is yours. There is no deadline or pressure to decide. If you stay as you are, the opportunity will always remain open to you to change later.

Q: "Is this privatisation of the electricity and gas industries?"

A: No. In Victoria and South Australia electricity retail suppliers have been sold to private operators. But this is not the case in NSW. The four NSW electricity companies remain Government-owned.

However, gas in NSW is almost entirely in private ownership, and has been private since the gas industry began more than 100 years ago.

Competition means that privately owned companies are now allowed to compete against the Government-owned companies to sell electricity. However, all the poles and wires that deliver the electricity to your home or business will remain in Government ownership.

Similarly, in the gas industry, new competitors will be allowed to enter the NSW market and compete against the current suppliers.

Q: "What are my options?"

A: You have 3 options:

- Stay with your **current** energy company on regulated terms and conditions, and at independently regulated prices.
- Stay with your **current** energy company, but negotiate with them to change to a new Supply Contract.
- Change to a **new** energy company of your own choice, and negotiate with them to change to a new Supply Contract.

Q: "What happens then?"

A: If you stay with your current company and do not want to negotiate a new contract with them, you will be supplied under the terms and conditions of a Standard Form Contract. There is no need to do anything, or sign anything.

- If you change to a new company, or to a new contract with your current supplier you will be supplied under the terms and conditions of a new negotiated contract.
- All new contracts are still covered by some key terms and conditions that are designed to protect you.
- If you don't want a new contract there will always be a standard company and contract available for everyone.

Q: "What will happen if I do nothing?"

A: Nothing will change. You will stay with your existing retail supplier on your current supply arrangements. You will continue to receive gas and electricity under the standard terms and conditions, and pay a price regulated by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

Q: "What if I do decide to change to a new company or to a new contract? How hard will it be to change back if I want to?"

A: It won't be hard at all. In fact, it will be very easy. You have the right to switch back by contacting the 'standard' retail company in your area, to return to standard terms and conditions, and regulated prices.

If you have signed a new contract, you'll have ten days to think about your decision after signing. During this cooling-off period you can change your mind without facing any charges or fees.

Some negotiated contracts may require you to pay fees or charges if you terminate that contract prior to the end of its term, and a re-connection fee might apply as well. These types of charges will be outlined in any new contract that is offered to you.

Prices, contracts and billing

Q: "Will my electricity and gas become cheaper if I change retail suppliers?"

A: A company will have to offer you a better deal if they want to win your business. And if they provide poor service you can always take your business elsewhere. The choice is yours.

If you do not want to shop around, you can remain with your existing energy company, on prices that will continue to be regulated by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

Q: "What types of contracts are available?"

A: There are two basic types of contracts – 'Standard Form' and 'Negotiated contracts'.

Standard Form contract - these contracts are offered by your existing local supplier and contain terms and conditions that protect your rights - they also give you access to regulated prices.

You can get a copy of the standard form contract at no charge from your current electricity or gas company.

Negotiated contracts - competition means that you can negotiate with any of the licensed electricity and gas companies in NSW.

You can negotiate on prices, the length of the contract, payment terms and other products or services that your supplier may also be offering. Or you can pick one of the packages that may be on offer.

Q: "Do I have to negotiate?"

A: No. If you don't want to negotiate, you don't have to.

For your protection, there are minimum contractual conditions that retail suppliers must include in the negotiated contracts. These protections cannot be negotiated away.

Prices, contracts and billing cont...

Q: "What happens if I move house?"

A: If you are supplied under the standard form contract, the contract will terminate at no cost to you. If you are supplied under a negotiated contract, then what happens will be whatever you agreed in the contract. This may allow the contract to be transferred to new premises.

- You must notify your retail supplier if you wish your service to be discontinued.
- You must notify your retail supplier three days before you move to avoid having to pay for gas or electricity used at the premises after you leave.

Q: "What will be printed on my bill, and how can I pay the bill?"

A: The costs of your electricity and gas must be shown as separate items on your bills.

If you're on standard supply, you can continue to pay your bill the same way you always have, such as by cash, cheque or by credit card on the phone, by internet or by mail, whichever you prefer.

If you choose a negotiated supply, you can negotiate the method of payment that suits you best.

Q: "What happens if I can't pay my bill?"

A: First, speak to your retail supplier and explain your circumstances.

Standard retail suppliers must offer payment plans to residential customers who have a standard form contract.

You can also speak to charitable organisations. Many will continue to offer assistance to help you pay bills when you are having difficulties.

However, if the bill remains unpaid, you may be disconnected. You will be notified before this happens.

Shopping around for a new supplier

Q: "Who will be able to sell me energy?"

A: Only companies licensed by the NSW Government will be able to sell electricity and gas.

The holder of an electricity or gas retailers' licence or authorisation is allowed to supply any customer in NSW.

Q: "Are any of these companies from interstate or privately owned?"

A: Yes. Some companies that sell electricity or gas in other States are also licensed to sell electricity and gas in NSW. There is a mix of Government owned and privately owned companies allowed to operate in NSW.

Q: "Will the retail suppliers have shop fronts?"

A: They may, and you should ask them. One benefit of competition is that, if you prefer to deal face-to-face with your supplier, you can choose one that provides this kind of service. However, the Government does not require retail suppliers to have shop fronts.

Q: "How can I be sure that an energy company has the necessary approvals?"

A: Energy retail companies must hold a licence issued by the NSW Government. You can check with the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) whether the company you are dealing with is licensed in NSW.

Q: "How can I be sure that the competing retail suppliers will be telling the truth?"

A: The NSW Government requires retail suppliers, and any agents acting on their behalf, to comply with a Marketing Code of Conduct approved by the Government. If

they don't, then they are subject to severe financial penalties.

Q: "What happens if my retail supplier goes out of business?"

A: Your electricity and gas supply will not be cut off. You will be automatically transferred to the standard supplier in your area.

Q: "How do I change to a new company?"

A: Simply call the company you prefer and provide them with some information from your current electricity or gas bill.

They'll want to know your National Metering Identifier number (for electricity) or your Delivery Point Identifier (for gas), which are clearly marked on your bills.

You will also need to give them written consent to proceed with the transfer of your account. Once you have done this, the new company will handle all the arrangements for you.

Concession and rebates

Q: "What will happen to my pensioner rebate?"

A: The Government will continue its program of pensioner rebates and other concessions. These rebates will be accessible to pensioners regardless of which company you choose. For many customers, Government rebates will increase from 1 January 2002.

Metering

Q: "Do I have to change my Meter?"

A: No. But if you want to change to a new company they may offer you a deal that includes replacing your current meter.

Q: "How will the retail supplier know how much electricity or gas I have used?"

A: It is your retail supplier's responsibility to arrange to have your meter read.

Q: "If I change my retail supplier, will I need a new meter or connection?"

A: Not necessarily. The same wires or pipes and the same meter can be used if you change retail supplier.

Safety and standards of supply

Q: "Will my electricity and gas be as safe and reliable as before?"

A: Yes. The introduction of competition will not affect the safety or the way your electricity or gas is delivered.

The NSW Government has strong safety requirements for the supply of electricity and gas.

Q: "Who do I contact if I have a problem with my supply?"

A: Phone the faults and difficulties number printed on your electricity or gas bill.

Complaints

Q: "What if I have a complaint, or think I have been treated unfairly?"

A: First, speak to your retail supplier. They are required to have a complaints handling and dispute resolution process.

If you are still unhappy, you can contact the Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON), who will try to resolve your complaint. You will not be charged anything for bringing your complaint to EWON.

You can contact EWON at:

Ph: (02) 8218 5200

Within NSW but outside the Sydney metropolitan area:

Freecall: 1800 246 545

Freefax: 1800 812 291

Want to know more? Ring any of the following retail companies:

Electricity		
ACTEWAGL RETAIL	www.actewagl.com.au	131493
AGL ELECTRICITY LTD	www.agl.com.au	1300 650 245
AUSTRALIAN INLAND ENERGY AND WATER	www.aienergy.com.au	1300 650 477
COUNTRY ENERGY	www.countryenergy.com.au	13 23 56
ENERGYAUSTRALIA	www.energy.com.au	131503
INTEGRAL ENERGY	www.integral.com.au	1300 76 76 08
PULSE ENERGY PTY LTD	www.pulsenet.com.au	133000

Gas		
ACTEWAGL RETAIL	www.actewagl.com.au	131 886
AGL RETAIL ENERGY LTD	www.agl.com.au	1300 650 245
COUNTRY ENERGY	www.countryenergy.com.au	13 23 56
ENERGYAUSTRALIA	www.energy.com.au	13 15 03
INTEGRAL ENERGY	www.integral.com.au	(02) 4423 8660 alt. 131 081

**For more information please visit www.nsw.gov.au or
call 1300 136 888 – Monday to Friday 8.30am to 7.30pm
Saturday 8.30am to 12.30pm.**

للحصول على معلومات بالعربية قم بزيارة الموقع www.nsw.gov.au

如需以粵語了解訊息，請訪問網站 www.nsw.gov.au

Za više podataka na hrvatskom jeziku posjetite www.nsw.gov.au

Για πληροφορίες στα ελληνικά επισκεφθείτε τον κόμβο www.nsw.gov.au

Per informazioni in italiano visita il sito www.nsw.gov.au

За обавештења на српском посетите www.nsw.gov.au

Para obtener información en español, visite www.nsw.gov.au

Muốn biết chi tiết bằng tiếng Việt, xin xem trong mạng truyền thông www.nsw.gov.au