



# EXPLAINING ELECTRICITY AND WATER CHARGES



## fact sheet

Home owners can be asked to pay utility charges in the form of:

- usage charges (this varies depending on how much they use).
- service availability charges (that is, as fixed amounts).

### When can utility charges be passed on?

Before a community owner can pass on utility charges two things need to have happened:

1. the use of the particular utility on the site must be separately measured or metered
2. the home owner must have agreed to pay the particular charge under the terms of the site agreement. Note: Utility charges are now standard terms for any agreements entered after the new laws began on 1st November 2015.

If a site is not metered, and a community owner wants to charge for utilities, the community owner must pay the cost of installing the meter. If a home owner hasn't been paying a utility charge and the community owner wants them to do so, they must give at least 14 days' written notice. There would need to be an agreed offset of the site fees. If the community owner and home owner cannot agree, an application can be made to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (the Tribunal) to resolve the matter.

### Are there limits on the amounts charged?

A community owner cannot charge a home owner usage charges for utilities more than they would otherwise be charged if they were a direct residential customer of a local utility service provider. Check your local provider's website to see what the standard rate for usage is.

The maximum service availability charge a home owner can be asked to pay for both water and sewerage service availability is \$50 each calendar year.

### What are the community owners' billing responsibilities?

They must provide an itemised account. This should set out what they are asking the home owner to pay, and how each amount has been calculated. They can determine the frequency of the billing cycle (for example, monthly or quarterly).

### How much time must I be given to pay?

When you are provided an itemised account, you must be given at least 21 days to pay the charges.

### What receipts are required?

A community owner must provide a receipt for any utility payments made in person. If utility payments are made by any other method, you only have to be given a receipt if you ask for one. A receipt for a utility payment must include:

- the name and address of the community
- the home owner's name
- their site number
- the amount paid
- any amount in debit or credit as at the date of payment
- the period covered by the payment
- the date the payment was received.

### Can I be charged late fees?

Yes. If a utility bill is not paid by the due date, or if a payment for utilities is dishonoured, you can be charged a late fee. It is the community owner's choice whether to charge such a fee. However, any late fee cannot be higher than would normally be charged if the home owner were a direct customer of the relevant local utility service provider.

### Can site fees be used to cover utility bills?

No. Money paid as site fees cannot be applied towards the payment of any other charges, including utilities.





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### Service Availability Charges Explained

The service availability charge (electricity) or supply charge (gas) is expressed in cents per day. This represents the fixed charges the network incurs (for example, meter readings, maintaining the poles and wires/pipes, vegetation management, maintaining a call centre), regardless of how much energy the customer uses. Every customer pays SAC, even if they have consumed little or no energy at all that quarter.

### What if the electricity supply is not up to standard?

Where the electricity being supplied to a site by the operator is less than 60 amps, the following service availability charge discount applies:

| Level of Supply to Site | Maximum Service Availability Charge (SAC) |
|-------------------------|---|
| Less than 20 amps       | 20% of relevant local area retailer's SAC |
| 20-29 amps              | 50% of relevant local area retailer's SAC |
| 30-59 amps              | 70% of relevant local area retailer's SAC |

Where 60 or more amps are capable of being supplied, a home owner is required to pay the full service availability charge even if the home is not capable of receiving this amount of supply. This applies, for example, in the case of old-style caravans.

### Can I be charged a fee for reading the meters?

The community owner has the right to enter a site to inspect, read, service, repair, or replace any meter. No fee can be charged for doing any of these.

### My community owner charges me for 32 amps, but I only can run 15 amps. Am I being overcharged?

Usually, there is a supply point. Some call it a "mushroom" or a meter box. Some boxes have multiple access points servicing several homes. This is the point of supply, and this is where the amps are measured at. If the point of supply is supplying 32 amps and your home is only able to draw 15amps, then the community owner can charge for 32 amps. However, if the community owner was to place a circuit breaker on the point of supply that was a 20-amp circuit breaker, then they could only charge 20 amps. This circuit breaker is known as a restricting device.

### Can I put a restricting device on my point of supply to lessen the SAC charge?

Plain and simple: no. You cannot put a device on the point of supply because it's not yours to alter.



# ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION LIST

## fact sheet



### Determining the Relevant Local Area Retailer



Energy tariffs vary depending on which energy distribution zone your community is situated in and different retailers operate in the different distribution zones.

Step 1: To find out which distribution zone your community is situated in refer to Schedule 3 of the Electricity Supply Act 1995 or the list below. The zones are divided up into Council areas. The three (3) main distribution zones in NSW are *Essential Energy*, *Ausgrid*, and *Endeavour Energy*. Once you have established which distribution zone your community is situated in, you then need to verify who the local area retailer is. You can do this with reference to Step 2 below.

Step 2: The following retailers are nominated as the local area retailers for premises specified below:

*Origin Energy* for premises in NSW connected to the following distribution systems: (a) the distribution system of *Essential Energy*, and (b) the distribution system of *Endeavour Energy*.

*Energy Australia* for premises in NSW connected to the distribution system of *Ausgrid*.

For example in reference to Steps 1 and 2 above, a community situated in Yass, NSW is situated in the Essential Energy distribution zone, and therefore, the relevant local area retailer is Origin Energy.

### Essential Energy

|               |             |               |            |                 |
|---------------|-------------|---------------|------------|-----------------|
| Albury        | Cooma       | Great Lakes   | Lismore    | Richmond Valley |
| Armidale      | Crookwell   | Greater Taree | Maclean    | Snowy River     |
| Ballina       | Dubbo       | Griffith      | Mudgee     | Tamworth        |
| Bathurst      | Dungog      | Hastings      | Numbucca   | Tweed           |
| Bega          | Eurobodalla | Holbrook      | Oberon     | Wagga Wagga     |
| Bellingen     | Gloucester  | Inverell      | Orange     | Wellington      |
| Byron         | Goulburn    | Kempsey       | Parkes     |                 |
| Coffs Harbour | Grafton     | Kyogle        | Queanbeyan |                 |

### Ausgrid

|           |            |                |               |        |
|-----------|------------|----------------|---------------|--------|
| Ashfield  | Cessnock   | Lake Macquarie | Newcastle     | Sydney |
| Auburn    | Gosford    | Lane Cove      | Port Stephens | Wyong  |
| Bankstown | Hurstville | Maitland       | Rockdale      |        |

### Endeavour Energy

|                |              |            |              |               |
|----------------|--------------|------------|--------------|---------------|
| Baulkham Hills | Camdem       | Kiama      | Penrith      | Wingecarribee |
| Blacktown      | Campbelltown | Liverpool  | Shellharbour | Wollondilly   |
| Blue Mountains | Hawkesbury   | Parramatta | Shoalhaven   | Wollongong    |

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