



# Talking energy with your peers

A community approach to help older Australians manage their energy bills

Sharing your knowledge and learning from others is a fantastic way to manage your energy bills and support your friends and neighbours to do the same.

Getting the best energy deal and making your home more energy efficient can seem complicated and overwhelming for some people. However, there are many simple actions we can all take and having conversations in your local community can help others.

## Simple facts and conversation starters

Here are three example energy topics to talk about, using some simple 'did you know' facts and suggested questions to start the conversations. Example answers are included but this of course depends on whether you have taken the action. Link the conversation back to your own experiences or some actions you could try together with your peers.



### How can I get a better energy deal?

- 💡 Power bills just keep going up – it's important that you get on the best plan
- 💡 Being a loyal customer is often not rewarded by energy companies
- 💡 Requesting a better deal or switching companies can save you hundreds of \$\$
- 💡 Some energy companies provide special discounts to seniors, you need to ask
- 💡 Anyone having trouble paying their bills should contact their energy company to ask for help and to be put on a payment plan
- 💡 Many state / territory governments offer electricity concessions for Seniors
- 💡 If you need more help, contact the National Debt Helpline on 1800 007 007.



***Have you received your state government rebate for electricity?***

(Conversation example): I contacted my energy company and applied for the rebate over the phone and got around \$300 towards my bill. It's not available everywhere or to everyone but worth asking.



***When was the last time you contacted your energy company to make sure you are on the best deal?***

(Conversation example): You should shop around every 12 months. I recently switched to a new company and have saved nearly \$40 a month through a better deal and a seniors' concession.



***Did you know you can pay more regularly to stop the huge bills?***

(Conversation example): I asked Centrelink to set up payments through Centrepay, so every fortnight a fixed amount is put to my energy bill from my pension. Then I don't get a shock with my next bill. You can do it through your energy company too. But do make sure it's an affordable amount so it won't cause problems with any of your other bills.



***Are you coping with the rising cost of energy?***

(Conversation example): I was having real trouble getting the money together for my last energy bill. So I rang the energy company and they gave me an extension and a plan for regular payments. If you're having trouble with your bills you should do the same and ask to be put on a payment plan. If you are still not coping, ask your energy company about their hardship program to get additional help.



## How can I save energy around the home but stay healthy?



- 💡 The average Australian home uses 40% of their energy on heating and cooling. This can be more in hot or cool climates, and for older people who are home a lot
- 💡 Some older Australians are rationing their energy use to save money, which can badly affect their health. Make sure the things that you do have an impact on your bill, not your health
- 💡 In winter you should keep the rooms you are spending time in to between 18°C and 20°C degrees Celsius. And in summer you should aim to keep the key areas of your home to around 24°C to 26°C
- 💡 Around 20% of energy usage in the average home goes on heating water. Having shorter showers and doing your laundry in cold water you can save a lot of money.



### ***Are you looking after yourself and staying warm this winter?***

Australians are used to living in homes that aren't very energy efficient, but to stay healthy as we get older, we need to stay warm in winter and cool in summer. You shouldn't have to go to bed early or be uncomfortable in your home.

(Conversation example): I got three draught stoppers from the hardware store to plug the gaps under my doors and it made a big difference at home. We also found some cheap heavy curtains from the local shops and our bedroom is so much warmer now. Let me know if you need help. Being frugal is important but not more important than your health.



***I'm being more energy conscious this winter. I got some energy efficient LED bulbs from the supermarket; I'm turning off the appliances at the wall and have plugged the gaps around my windows.***

Let me know if you need a hand with anything at home.





***Now that summer is over, and we have less visitors I've turned off the beer fridge in the garage and adjusted the pool pump. I'm sure it will save me a heap on my next energy bill. You should do the same!***



## Should I update my appliances?

- 💡 **Appliances and equipment - including refrigeration and cooking - use on average around 33% of a household's energy**
- 💡 **Older appliances are usually much less energy efficient. A fridge from 1992 will use almost three times as much energy as a new model**
- 💡 **Newer dishwashers use 25% less energy compared to 10 years ago**
- 💡 **Many State / Territory Governments offer schemes to help you upgrade your old appliances to energy efficient ones**
- 💡 **The Australia-wide No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) is a great way to upgrade your white goods, small heaters and coolers, or hot water system. NILS is designed for people on a low-income or benefits. You can call and find out more on 136 457.**



## ***Are you due for a new fridge?***

(Conversation example): Our old fridge seemed to be working fine, but when I found out how much it was costing us to run, it made sense to go out and get a new one. I contacted the state government and they told me how to get a big discount with my Seniors Card. You should do the same and get an energy efficient fridge.

Just because your old appliances still work doesn't mean you should keep them. Look to upgrade to energy efficient models and see what schemes are in place to assist.





### ***Have you heard about the NILS scheme?***

I heard through the local council about this No Interest Loan Scheme - you can get up to \$1500 to buy new appliances and pay it back over a year or more. How good is that! I just called 13 NILS (**136 457**).



### ***Will the government help me out at all?***

In South Australia you can borrow equipment from the library to do a home energy audit that shows you what equipment is using the most energy. It's brilliant and you'll be surprised where your energy goes. You should find out if there's something like that over your way – even ask your local Council.



## **Long-term savings with solar**

**Solar panels and batteries can be a great way to manage your energy bills. The state governments in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria have great schemes to help people with their solar.**

**By sharing some of these facts and simple actions through conversation with your peers you could make a big impact on their energy bills. And by starting conversations you could learn from neighbours and friends how to better manage your energy costs.**