

Media Release

For release under embargo – for publication 12.01am, Thursday July 16

Almost 1 in 3 Australian households struggling to pay electricity bills while confusing energy market takes its toll, new survey shows

Almost 1 in 3 Australian households report difficulty paying electricity bills over the last 6 months, as consumers are forced to navigate a complex and confusing market, research released today by Energy Consumers Australia (ECA) shows. To fix the broken system, ECA is calling for the introduction of a consumer duty, which would require energy companies to demonstrate they are acting in the interests of consumers and promoting good outcomes for customers.

The [Consumer Energy Report Card](#), a national survey of about 4500 households, also shows 62% of Australian households have avoided heating or cooling their homes to save money, and around 1 in 5 have been unable to pay an energy bill on time due to financial difficulties.

“Many people across the nation are struggling to pay their power bills, and dealing with a complex and confusing market is making a bad situation worse,” ECA Chief Executive Officer Dr Brendan French said.

Households across Australia report confusion with the current energy market, leading to poor outcomes and inertia. ECA’s research has also found one in ten Australians households never review their power plan, and a quarter say they review their power plan less than once a year, leaving them exposed to a “loyalty tax”. For those consumers who review their plans less than annually, 30% state it is too hard to compare plans, 26% believe switching is not worth the effort and 20% say it takes too much time.

“This is a huge market design failing,” Dr French said. “The system relies on consumer engagement, yet it actively discourages millions of households from engaging through its needless complexity.

“Our research has found that almost 6 in 10 Australians want a basic, passive relationship with their energy provider - they just want a fair price and reliable service. However, our broken market structure forces everyday people to act like highly literate market day-traders just to find a good deal.

“Consumers stick with their current provider because navigating the market is too time-consuming or difficult, meaning the current system effectively exploits consumer confusion to the detriment of the household budget.”

[Australian Competition and Consumer Commission research](#) in December 2025 showed that households who have been on the same electricity plan for more than three years are paying around \$221 a year more than customers on new plans, with 37% of people paying more than the default market offer.

ECA’s survey also reveals that only 29% of Australians definitely understand how their electricity bill is calculated, and only 23% definitely know what a “retail electricity tariff” is.

ECA is calling for the introduction of a consumer duty to make energy retailers accountable for providing fair pricing, understandable products and necessary consumer protections.

“A consumer duty would shift the onus onto energy providers to promote good outcomes for consumers by default, instead of keeping the burden on households to navigate a market that is needlessly complex and confusing,” Dr French said.

“There is already broad support for this critical shift from the ACCC, energy regulators, consumer advocates, academics, ombudsmen, and many of the major energy retailers. This is what 21st century regulation of an essential service looks like. We welcome the ACCC’s [endorsement](#) of our consumer duty model as the most suitable pathway forward.

“We welcome energy ministers’ ongoing commitment to consult on this important reform, but they must urgently accelerate this critical work.”

For interview requests or more information, call Stuart Turner on 0415 403 208 or email media@energyconsumersaustralia.com.au

About Energy Consumers Australia

[Energy Consumers Australia](#) is the independent, national voice for residential and small business energy consumers. We enable residential and small business energy consumers to have their voices heard.

Editor's notes:

Conducted every six months, the *Consumer Energy Report Card* is one of Australia's largest surveys of the priorities, needs and attitudes of Australian energy consumers. Data for this survey was collected by SEC Newgate on behalf of Energy Consumers Australia from 4507 Australian households in April 2026. It surveyed Australian adults who are responsible for paying energy bills and/or choosing energy products and/or services for their household. [Click here to view the survey data](#).