



ELECTRICITY, GAS AND WATER

Information for new transitional housing tenants

Now that you've signed a lease and become a tenant, utilities—such as electricity, gas and water—will be your responsibility. This fact sheet will help you avoid possible utility hassles.

To avoid utility hassles, set up accounts as soon as you move in and close them when you move out.

Setting up an electricity or gas account

The easiest way to set up an account is to ring the previous occupant's energy company or contact your preferred company. Use the Victorian Government's independent energy price comparator – Victorian Energy Compare: compare.switchon.vic.gov.au

If the gas or electricity isn't already on, the company will need two business days' notice.

Your electricity company is:



Phone:

Your gas company is:



Phone:

Your bulk hot water company is (if applicable):



Phone:

(to be filled in by the Transitional Housing Manager)

You'll need to provide identification and other details. Don't worry if you're asked whether you're on benefits and have a Centrelink number. The company needs this information to give you concessions which will help reduce your electricity and gas costs.

There is a connection fee, but you don't have to pay it upfront—it will be included on your first bill. If you hold a concession card, you may be able to get a concession on the electricity connection fee. **Don't forget to ask for it.**

[EWOV's Fact Sheet 6: Concessions and grants](#) explains the different types of energy and water concessions available in Victoria.

You must phone the electricity or gas company even if the power or gas is on.

If you don't, the company won't know when you moved in and it may charge you for a longer period.

Setting up a water account

You have to use the water corporation for the area where you're living.

Your local water corporation is:



Phone:

(to be filled in by the Transitional Housing Manager)

The cost of water is divided between you and the landlord. You pay for the water you use and the landlord pays the service fees.

In metropolitan areas the property owner must, by law, tell the water corporation that you've moved in.

It's also in your interests to let the water corporation know you've moved in. If you don't you could be charged back to the last time the meter was read.

Sometimes Transitional Housing Managers will arrange for the electricity, gas and water to be connected for you.

They may use a utility connection service for this. It can save you time, but you may not get to choose your electricity or gas company. See the reverse of this fact sheet for more information about changing companies.

Sharing

If you're sharing with someone who isn't part of your family, the Transitional Housing Manager should keep the utility accounts in their name. It will charge you a regular amount for your utilities as part of your rent.



Choosing an energy company

You don't have to use the previous energy company – you can choose your own.

You might also be contacted by electricity and gas salespeople who try to get you to change your company.

You don't have to say yes—but you may choose to.

If you sign up with an energy company that isn't the last energy company used for your new property, you'll be on a market contract. Sometimes market contracts are cheaper than the previous company's standard contract but, to get savings, you may have to sign up for two or three years—and the company can charge you an exit fee if you close the account before that time is up. Remember that in transitional housing your tenancy is considered to be short-term.

If you're interested in a market contract, ask about exit fees and other charges. Also ask the company for an Offer Summary—this sets out the main information you'll need to make your decision. [EWOV's Fact Sheet 15: Changing Energy Retailers](#) may help.

Need help with bills?

Electricity bills usually come every 3 months and water bills every 3 or 4 months, depending on where in Victoria you live. Gas bills generally come every 2 months but from 1 January 2015 they may be sent every 3 months.

They can be a shock when they arrive, but there is help available to you:

- If you're on a government pension, tell the company because you might receive concessions.
- Spread your payments. It may help you to have some of your Centrepay payment taken out fortnightly before you get it. Your company can help you organise this. You can also get a card from your company to make small regular payments towards your bills at the post office. This is often called 'EasyPay' or 'EasyWay'.
- If you want to pay—but just can't—ring your company and ask for the hardship team. All energy and water companies have hardship programs.

- If something unexpected happens (a big bill or a big expense), you can apply for a Victorian Government Utility Relief Grant. You can only get one grant for electricity, one for gas and one for water every two years—so be careful about when you apply. Ask your company for the application form. If you're having difficulty with all three bills, you can include them all in your application. The Department of Health and Human Services Concessions Unit can give you more information—ring **1800 658 521** or visit: <http://ow.ly/ZSeeU>

Moving out

You must tell the companies when you move out. If you don't, they may keep charging you. Or, when you go to set up another account, they may transfer the debt to your new account. Keep a note of when you rang and who you spoke to — in case there are problems afterwards. Telling the company will also mean that you save the next tenant coming in after you some hassles.



Checklist

Don't know where to start? This checklist may help.

Things you can do:

- Talk to your Transitional Housing Manager to find out the names of the property's previous energy companies.

Talking to your company:

- Ring the companies and set up your accounts.
- If you received a bill you can't pay, ring the company and say you're having some difficulty paying. As long as you make an effort to pay—and to stay in touch with the company—they should help you.

Contacting EWOV:

- If you can't sort out the problem directly with your company, contact EWOV.
- Have **all your details ready**, including contracts, bills and your own notes.