

A GUIDE TO



[compare.energy.vic.gov.au](http://compare.energy.vic.gov.au)

**Ni** energy info hub

## About this guide

This guide is written by the Consumer Policy Research Centre (CPRC) and forms part of the free training run by CPRC's EnergyInfoHub to assist people to find and compare electricity, gas and solar offers using the Victorian Government's **Victorian Energy Compare** website.

## About Victorian Energy Compare

Victorian Energy Compare shows all generally available electricity, gas and solar offers and provides an **estimate of the annual cost** with each of the various retailers - listing them from cheapest to most expensive.

By providing the overall cost of electricity or gas with each of the retailers Victorian Energy Compare takes the confusion out of comparing energy offers (Note: Victorian Energy Compare only provides information – you have to contact the company yourself to switch providers).

Unlike other privately operated price comparison sites, Victorian Energy Compare is:

- **independent**
- **up-to-date**; and
- **complete** – showing *all* the generally available electricity and gas offers in Victoria





## Using Victorian Energy Compare




Victorian Energy Compare is free. To use the site visit:




[compare.energy.vic.gov.au](https://compare.energy.vic.gov.au)




You will need:

- information about your house
- a recent electricity and/or gas bill; and
- a computer

<p>AVERAGE DAILY USAGE</p>	<p>The average amount of electricity (kWh) or gas (MJ) used each day.</p> <p> Look for the graph on the bill. The average number of kWh or MJ used per day is usually found next to the graph.</p> <p><b>Important:</b> look for the number of kWh or MJ used <i>NOT</i> the cost per day.</p>
<p>CONCESSIONS (ENERGY)</p>	<p>A payment from the Department of Health and Human Services to assist low income Victorians with the cost of energy bills.</p> <p> A person is eligible for an energy concession if they are the holder of a valid Health Care, Pension or Department of Veteran’s Affairs concession card.</p>
<p>CONTROLLED LOAD</p>	<p>Also known as <b>Dedicated Circuit</b>, a separate circuit in a house to run large electrical appliances, such as <b>hot water</b> (over 120 Litres) or <b>slab heating</b>. Appliances running on this circuit (i.e. slab heating or hot water) are usually charged at a <b>cheaper off peak rate overnight</b>.</p> <p> To work out if someone has controlled load look for the words ‘Controlled Load’ or ‘Dedicated Circuit’. Also check to see if the person is receiving the Controlled Load Energy Concession on their electricity bill.</p>
<p>DISCOUNTS</p>	<p>Offered by the retailer to attract people to the offer. Discounts can be either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unconditional (i.e. you will always receive them, such as 5% off the normal price); or</li> <li>• conditional (i.e. you only receive them in certain situations, such as by paying your bill on time).</li> </ul> <p>Discounts are either applied to the total bill or just the usage component (i.e. the rate charged per kWh or MJ).</p> <p> Look for the <b>percentage discount</b> received on the electricity bill and check if the discount applies to <b>usage</b> or <b>total bill</b>.</p> <p>You can sort all the offers in Victorian Energy Compare by discounted price so that the price shown includes the discount.</p> <p><b>Important:</b> Consider if you will meet all the conditions to receive a discount (such as paying your bill on time and in full) before choosing a discounted offer. For some discounted offers you pay a much higher price if you don’t pay your bills on time.</p>

FEED-IN TARIFF	<p>The rate (in cents per kWh) that households are paid for the excess electricity their solar systems 'sell' back to the grid.</p> <p> The easiest way to work out your Feed-in Tariff rate is to look at your electricity bill to see if you are receiving credits for any excess electricity your solar system sells back to the grid. Look for the <b>rate paid for each kWh sold</b> back to the grid. Feed-in Tariff rates vary according to when you set up your solar system and can range from just a few cents per kWh to as much as 60 cents per kWh.</p>
FLEXIBLE PRICING	<p>Flexible pricing has three different time periods, each with its own price:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Peak' period where electricity costs the most money;</li> <li>• 'Shoulder' period when it costs a bit less; and</li> <li>• 'Off-Peak' period when electricity is at its cheapest.</li> </ul> <p> If you have flexible pricing, you should see these three different rates on your electricity bill.</p>
KWH	<p>A kilowatt is a unit of measurement for electricity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just like 1000 metres = 1 <b>kilometre</b> or 1km, 1000 Watts = 1 <b>kilowatt</b> or 1kW.</li> <li>• If you use 1kW for 1 hour it means you've used <b>1kWh</b> of electricity.</li> </ul>
OFFER	<p>An electricity contract that details the price and terms and conditions for providing electricity to your house. Also known as 'Energy Plans' or 'Energy Deals'.</p>
OFF-PEAK	<p>A cheaper rate for every unit (kWh) of electricity you use. Off peak rates can either be for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• certain appliances only (usually hot water and slab heating). This is known as '<b>Dedicated Circuit</b>' or '<b>Controlled Load</b>'; or</li> <li>• all household appliances at a particular time of day, usually overnight (usually available when signed up to a flexible pricing offer).</li> </ul> <p> To find your off-peak rates look for the words 'Off-Peak' on the back of your bill. Look for a rate that is around half your normal peak rate (for example, \$0.14/kWh).</p>

<p>PEAK RATE</p>	<p>The amount you pay for every unit of electricity you use. Usually shown on an electricity bill either in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>dollars per kilowatt hour (for example, \$0.28/kWh); or</li> <li>cents per kilowatt hour (for example, 28c/kWh).</li> </ul> <p> To work out your Peak Rate look at the back of your electricity bill for the price you pay per kWh.</p> <p><b>Important:</b> check whether Victorian Energy Compare is asking for the rate to be entered in dollars or cents.</p>
<p>POOL HEATING</p>	<p>The method for heating swimming pool water. There are 3 main ways that pools are heated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>solar – uses ‘free’ heat from the sun to heat pool water via a collector (e.g. rubber strips) mounted on a roof.</li> <li>gas – heats pool water quickly but can be expensive if used for long periods.</li> <li>electric – either small units that work in a similar way to an electric kettle or heat pump units that extract heat from the air in a similar way to reverse cycle air conditioners.</li> </ul>
<p>RETAILER</p>	<p>The energy company that sends you the bill (i.e. their logo appears on the bill).</p>
<p>SERVICE TO PROPERTY</p>	<p>See Supply Charge (below).</p>
<p>SHOULDER RATES</p>	<p>Part of a flexible pricing plan (see Flexible Pricing above). Shoulder rates are usually in between cheaper off-peak rates and the more expensive peak rates.</p>
<p>SMART METER DATA FILE</p>	<p>Data from your smart meter that shows how much electricity a household has used every 30 minutes.</p> <p> You can export <b>your electricity smart meter data</b> to Victorian Energy Compare to get very accurate costs for each of the electricity retailers. To do this visit your electricity distributor’s portal (the distributor is the company that is responsible for the meter – their details are listed in the Faults and Emergencies section of your bill).</p>
<p>SOLAR EXPORT</p>	<p>The amount of surplus electricity sold back to the grid.</p> <p> The total amount of solar electricity sold back to the grid can be found on your electricity bill. Look for the word ‘solar’ on the back of your bill and then look for the total number of kW sold. <b>Note:</b> not all solar systems will produce surplus electricity to sell back to the grid.</p>

SOLAR PANELS	Roof top panels that generate electricity. If unsure, whether your panels are for heating water or generating electricity, there will generally be <b>more panels</b> on the roof to generate electricity rather than to heat hot water.
SOLAR PANEL CAPACITY	<p>The size of the solar system in kW.</p> <p> The easiest way to work out the capacity or size of your solar system is to look at the documentation provided with your system.</p> <p>If you don't have the documentation, a good rule of thumb is that each individual solar panel is roughly 250 Watts. So:</p> <p>Solar Panel Capacity (in kW) = number of panels / 4</p> <p>If still unsure, click 'I don't know' and Victorian Energy Compare will enter the average system capacity for Victoria.</p>
SUPPLY CHARGE	<p>Also known as <b>Service to Property</b>, <b>Daily Charge</b> or <b>Fixed Charge</b> and is a fixed rate you pay for being connected to the electricity network. Usually shown as cents per day (for example 101c/day).</p> <p> To work out supply charges look for the total amount of supply charges from a bill.</p> <p><b>Important:</b> on some bills the supply charges may be shown as two separate amounts and you will need to <b>add these together</b> to get a total for the whole billing period.</p>
TIME OF USE	Similar to flexible pricing but with only peak and off peak rates (no shoulder rates). Time of use prices are not available to all households, it may depend on where in Victoria you live, and on your house.
TOTAL GAS CHARGES	The total charges for gas, including usage and supply charges, as shown on a gas bill.
WHAT AM I PAYING?	A part of Victorian Energy Compare where you can enter the rates you pay with your current retailer. By entering your rates you will be able to compare the annual cost of your current retailer to all the other retailers available.
VICTORIAN ENERGY COMPARE	<p>An independent price comparison website run by the Victorian Government to assist people to find and compare electricity, gas and solar offers.</p> <p> <a href="http://compare.energy.vic.gov.au">compare.energy.vic.gov.au</a></p>

# Heating

Electric ducted central heating



- Whole of house heating
- Has a large outdoor compressor unit

Split System air conditioning unit used as a heater



- Has a second unit that sits outdoors
- Has a remote control

Electric underfloor heating



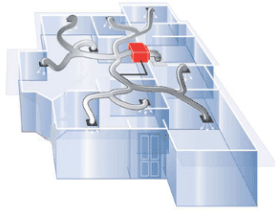
- Heat provided by electric coils in a concrete slab

Individual electric room heaters



- Plug in heaters

Gas ducted central heating



- Whole of house heating
- Has outdoor gas furnace
- Warm air comes through either floor or ceiling ducts

Gas slab heating



- Heat provided by hot water running through concrete slab
- Hot water heated by boiler or solar hot water

Individual gas room heaters



Other heating



- Includes wood heating

# Cooling

Room air conditioner



-Air conditioner that sits half inside and half outside a wall or window

Split system



-Has a second unit that sits outdoors  
-Has a remote control

Ducted reverse cycle



-Whole of house air-conditioning  
-Has a large outdoor compressor unit

Ducted evaporative



-Uses water to cool air  
-Large unit located on roof  
-Cool air comes through ceiling vents

Portable refrigerated



-Plug in air conditioner  
-Comes with exhaust pipe that is placed in window

Portable evaporative



-Plug in cooler  
-Need to add water

other



-Includes pedestal and ceiling fans



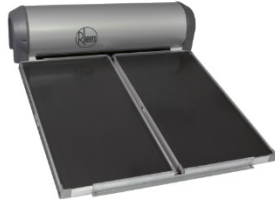
# Hot water

electric



- Generally, round in shape
- Unable to adjust thermostat
- Usually silent operation
- Includes heat pump hot water systems

Electric and solar



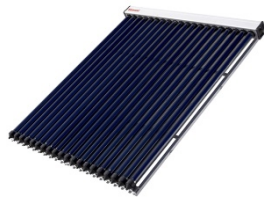
- Roof top panels to heat hot water
- Comes with electric boost found either on the roof or at ground level

Gas storage



- Generally square in shape
- Able to adjust thermostat
- Can hear the system 'fire up'

Gas and solar



- Roof top panels to heat hot water
- Comes with gas boost found at ground level. Gas boost can either be storage or instantaneous

Gas instantaneous



- Small outdoor units
- Heats hot water on demand

## Things to consider before switching

Other than price there are some important things to consider before signing up to a new electricity offer:

- will you be 'locked in' to a **contract**? With some companies you will have to pay an 'exit fee' if you want to change companies (this can range from as little as \$20 to a lot more depending on the offer).
- how are you **billed**? Some of the cheapest deals only come with e-mail bills, not paper ones sent through the post. You should only sign up to that type of plan if you have an email address and access to the internet.
- how can you **pay**? Some energy companies might charge extra to use some payment methods (such as direct debit) or may want you to pay monthly with automatic credit card payments.

## Making the switch

If you find an offer that you like:

- Check with the company sending you bills to see if they are able to **match the new offer**. If they're unable to check to see if you must pay an **exit fee** to leave
- Contact the retailer of the new offer and give them **the offer ID** as shown on Victorian Energy Compare
- Before agreeing to the terms and conditions, **ask any questions** you may have (for example, will you receive a paper bill and what options there are to pay the bill?)
- Provide your **concession card details**, if you have one

If you're happy, the new energy company will organise the rest – you do not need to contact your old energy company. Remember, it is ok to change your mind - you are covered by a **10-day cooling-off period**. During this time, you can contact the company to cancel the new energy offer.