

Media Release: Joint project to simplify power bills

Published: Thursday, 2 June 2022

Simplifying power bills aim of joint Consumer Advocacy Council and Consumer NZ project

Power bills need to be standardised across the market to help consumers easily switch between retailers and drive greater competition, the Consumer Advocacy Council said today.

“It’s high time all power bills were simple to understand,” said the Chair of the Consumer Advocacy Council Deborah Hart in launching a joint research project with Consumer NZ.

“Power bills can be very confusing for many consumers; often vital information is hard to find, and this just frustrates people. It makes it really difficult to switch retailers and that needs to change if we are to have a more competitive retail market.”

The newly formed Consumer Advocacy Council is working with Consumer NZ to investigate how bills are presented, with the aim of encouraging the industry to adopt a standard approach.

“Some retailers do this well, others don’t and we are working with Consumer NZ to develop a standardised bill - an easy to understand presentation of consumption data and pricing plans that’s consistent across retailers.

“Consumer NZ has done important work in this area and its price comparison site Powerswitch has been a real help for many consumers who want to change retailers, but it’s underutilised. That’s because it’s often difficult for consumers to understand their power bill so that they can’t confidently make decisions and identify their plans, including the price they pay and the amount of power they consume in a year.

“If consumers have the right information at their fingertips, they’ll find it easier to switch and find a retailer that best suits their budget. This will mean a better result for all consumers; improve services and keep downward pressure on prices.

The Consumer Advocacy Council was set up following the Electricity Pricing Review in 2019 to provide an independent voice for residential and small business electricity consumers who often struggle to be heard.

“We’re determined to be a strong voice for consumers so we’re excited simplifying power bills is the first piece of work we’re launching as this goes to the heart of some of the frustrations consumers have with their power retailer.” said Deborah Hart.

The findings of this project will be available mid-October 2022.