

Smart meters – frequently asked questions

Awareness and understanding

What is a smart meter?

- **Q: What is a smart meter?**
 - A: Smart meters are the current technology for recording your electricity use. They are replacing older meters, some of which are decades old, and aren't designed to work with new technology.
- **Q: What do smart meters do?**
 - A: Smart meters record your electricity use throughout the day and send your readings to your electricity company, meaning no more manual meter reads. They are also a step towards getting new technologies like solar panels and batteries, and give you more options to manage your costs.
- **Q: What does a smart meter look like?**
 - A: A smart meter is a small box with a digital screen, usually mounted in your meter box on the outside of your property. Older meters use spinning dials to record your electricity usage. You can also contact your electricity company to find out if you have a smart meter.
- **Q: Who is my electricity company?**
 - A: Your electricity company is the business you buy electricity from. They send you your bill and will be your first point of contact about getting a smart meter installed. Electricity companies are also known as energy retailers. You can find the name and contact details of your electricity company on your electricity bill.
- **Q: How often do smart meters record and send usage data?**
 - A: Smart meters record your electricity use every 30 minutes. They typically send this information to your electricity company once or twice a day.
- **Q: Does the national rollout include the water and gas meters at my property?**
 - A: No, the national rollout only includes electricity meters. Your existing gas and water meters will keep working the same way and will continue to be read manually by a meter reader if needed.
- **Q: How is smart meter technology evolving?**
 - A: Like other digital devices, smart meters are becoming more capable. In the future this may include being able to provide a data stream about your energy use in real time, making it

easier to track your usage and find ways to save on bills. Real-time data could also help you maximise the benefits of solar panels, home batteries and electric vehicles.

Who will get a smart meter and when?

- **Q: Who will receive a smart meter as part of the national rollout?**
 - A: The aim is for all homes and small businesses — including apartments and other shared buildings — to have a smart meter by 2030. This rollout covers New South Wales, Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory, and South Australia. In Victoria and Tasmania, smart meter rollouts are already finished or close to complete.
- **Q: When will I get a smart meter?**
 - A: The aim of the national rollout is for everyone to have a smart meter by 2030. You can contact your electricity company for more information about how installations are being scheduled in your area.
- **Q: What if I want a smart meter sooner?**
 - A: If you would like a smart meter before the national rollout reaches your area, you can ask your electricity company about upgrading early. It is important to know that if you request an early installation, your electricity company may charge an upfront fee. Upfront fees may also apply if your property is newly built and being connected to electricity for the first time.
- **Q: What if I'm a renter?**
 - A: Rental properties are also getting smart meters as part of the national rollout. If the electricity account is in your name, your electricity company will contact you to arrange the installation – not the homeowner.
- **Q: What if I live in an apartment or townhouse?**
 - A: In apartments and townhouses, all the meters are usually grouped together in one place — like a shared meter room or switchboard. If you share an electricity connection with your neighbours, smart meters should, where possible, be installed in groups to make the process easier for everyone.
- **Q: I am an embedded network customer and need to get my meter replaced. Does it need to be a smart meter?**
 - A: No. If you live in an embedded network (such as a caravan park or retirement village), replacement meters do not have to be smart meters. If you would like to upgrade to a smart meter, you can ask your electricity provider about your options, including whether any costs apply.
- **Q: Am I in an embedded network?**
 - A: If you're not sure, the easiest way is to ask the company that bills you for your electricity. You can also contact the manager of your apartment or residential complex, retirement village or residential park. For more information on embedded networks, visit the AER's website: <https://www.aer.gov.au/consumers/understanding-energy/embedded-networks-customers>

- **Q: What if I live in a regional or remote area?**
 - A: The national rollout covers regional and remote communities as well as metropolitan areas. The goal is for every household and small business to have a smart meter by 2030.
- **Q: What if I have communications connectivity issues where I live?**
 - A: When the smart meter is installed, the installer will connect it to a secure wireless network. If they identify signal issues, they can boost the strength of the connection on the day. Your electricity company will let you know if they need to make an alternative arrangement to read your smart meter. The smart meter doesn't use your home Wi-Fi. It sends data through a separate, secure wireless network.
- **Q: Is the national smart meter rollout for large business and industrial customers too?**
 - A: No. Large business and industrial customers are already required to have smart meters with specific functionality.

Why is the rollout happening?

- **Q: What is the national rollout and why is it happening?**
 - A: The national rollout is a program to install smart meters in all homes and small businesses by 2030. In the past, smart meters were installed when:
 - you got a new electricity connection
 - your old meter stopped working
 - you requested one to support new technology like solar panels, batteries, or electric vehicles.

To support Australia's energy future, including the shift to these new technologies, a faster and more coordinated approach was needed. Under the national rollout, all old meters will be replaced with new smart meters in a planned way, according to a schedule for each network area.

The national rollout is guided by rules set by the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) under the *Accelerating smart meter deployment* project. The Australian Energy Regulator (AER) provides guidance to electricity companies on the rules they must follow when rolling out smart meters to their customers and monitors them to make sure they are following those rules.

- **Q: What are the benefits of a smart meter for me?**
 - A: Smart meters record your electricity use throughout the day and send readings to your electricity company, meaning no more manual meter reads. They are also a step towards getting new technologies like solar panels and batteries and can provide more options for you to manage your costs.

Smart meters also open up new opportunities, including:

- installing new technology such as solar panels and batteries in your home or small business
- understanding your electricity use through the apps and online portals offered by many electricity companies (these can show when you use the most electricity, which can help find ways to save on bills)
- more choice in electricity plans, such as time-of-use plans, which can offer cheaper rates for people for using electricity at off-peak times
- a more efficient, effective energy system with fewer costly new poles and wires, bringing down costs to all consumers in the future.

- **Q: What role do smart meters have in the energy system now and in the future?**

- A: Smart meters provide data that helps everyone – from individual households to electricity companies – make better decisions and operate more efficiently, reliably, and with lower costs and emissions.

Information and tools enabled by smart meters can help households and small businesses better understand and manage how much electricity they use at different times of the day. By reducing pressure on the grid during peak times, smart meters help avoid the need for expensive new infrastructure, keeping costs and emissions down for everyone.

Smart meters can make it faster and easier to get your power connected. For example, instead of waiting for someone to visit your property to turn the power on, your electricity company can do it remotely. This is particularly helpful if you're moving into a new home or need your power reconnected.

Smart meter data also gives electricity networks more visibility of how electricity is moving around the grid. This includes helping them to identify the location and cause of outages, contributing to a more reliable electricity supply for everyone.

Insights from smart meters also help networks better plan the future of the grid. The data shows where demand is growing, helping networks plan upgrades and connect more renewable technologies like rooftop solar, batteries, and electric vehicle chargers.

- **Q: What changes will come with the national smart meter rollout?**

- A: The key changes to the National Electricity Rules and National Energy Retail Rules are:
 - from December 2025, older meters will be proactively upgraded to smart meters as part of planned replacement programs in each network area
 - customers no longer have the option to refuse the installation of a new meter
 - new consumer safeguards have been introduced, including:
 - no upfront fees at the time of installation
 - new protections that, for the first two years after they installed the meter, your electricity company can't change certain parts of your plan because you got a smart meter without your permission.

What are the costs of smart meters?

- **Q: Do I need to pay to get a smart meter installed?**

- A: For most people, the upgrade will be a simple swap. An installer will replace the old meter in your meter box with a new smart meter, which usually takes about an hour.

There's no upfront cost to you where the smart meter is installed as part of the national rollout. This means your electricity company cannot ask you to pay any extra fees or charges for the smart meter at the time it's installed.

For information about what happens if your installer finds issues with your metering board or wiring that needs to be fixed before a smart meter can be installed, including who is responsible and potential costs, see the FAQs below.

- **Q: What will a smart meter cost me?**

- A: The cost of the upgrade is part of your regular electricity bills if you own or rent your property — similar to poles and wires, and existing meters. Your electricity company will be able to provide further information about smart meter costs.

- **Q: How will the smart meter be paid for?**

- A: Electricity companies cannot charge you an upfront fee when a smart meter is installed as part of the national rollout. Instead, they recover the costs over time. This can vary between electricity companies. It may appear as a specific metering service charge on your bill or be included in your overall electricity charges without being listed separately.

- **Q: Do I own my current meter, and who will own the new meter?**

- A: No, you don't own the current meter. Your electricity company contracts a metering coordinator business, who manages the meter and is responsible for looking after it and making sure it works properly. This will also be true for your new meter.

Notification and installation

Before the installation

- **Q: Who will arrange for the smart meter?**

- A: Your electricity company — the one that sends you your bill — is responsible for arranging the installation. They will send a qualified installer to safely do the work.

- **Q: When will my smart meter be installed, and how will I be notified?**

- A: Your electricity company will arrange to install a smart meter when the old meter is scheduled to be upgraded. They will send you a letter, text or email at least four business days before the installation.

- **Q: Can I choose when my smart meter is installed?**
 - A: The notice about your installation will specify a time window of five business days when the work will be done. If you have specific needs in relation to, for example, access to your property or business trading requirements, you can talk to your electricity company about options for scheduling your installation.
- **Q: Do I need to do anything to prepare for the installation?**
 - A: For most people, the installation will be a simple swap. You should check that the area around your meter box is clear and easy to get to. If there are locked gates or fences, make sure the installer can safely access them. If your meter box is safe and easy to access for the installer, there's nothing you need to do.
- **Q: Where is my electricity meter usually located?**
 - A: In most Australian homes, the meter is in a meter box on an outside wall — often near the front or side of the house. In apartment blocks, meters are often grouped together in a locked meter room, cage or cupboard.

Installation

- **Q: What do I need to do on the day of installation? Do I need to be home?**
 - A: If your meter box is easy and safe to access, you don't need to be home on the day — just like when the meter is read manually. If it is inside your property, or there are other access issues, you may need to be home to help the installer access the meter. If you are home, you can ask the installer for photo ID. They will never request any personal details or payments. If you're unsure, contact your electricity company to check and make arrangements.
- **Q: How long will my power be out during the installation?**
 - A: Your electricity will be off for a short time, usually around an hour, while the new meter is installed.
- **Q: What if I have life support equipment?**
 - A: The electricity to your property will be turned off for a short period, usually around an hour, while the smart meter is installed. If you or someone in your home uses life support equipment, make sure you are registered as a life support customer with your electricity company. They must provide you with a specific appointment time for your installation and information to help you plan for the short power outage. If you or someone in your home is using life support equipment, your electricity company cannot interrupt your power supply without you agreeing to that date and timing. For a simple checklist developed with health and consumer organisations to help you plan for when your electricity supply is interrupted, visit lifesupport.poweroutageplan.com.au.
- **Q: Who will be installing the smart meter and do they need to come into my home?**
 - A: A certified and licensed installer, working for your electricity company, will install the smart meter. In most homes, the installer does not need to come inside — they only

need access to your meter box, which is usually outside. If the meter is inside your home, the installer may need access. On the day you can ask the installer for photo ID. They will never request any personal details or payments.

- **Q: What if I live in an apartment building or townhouse?**
 - A: If you live in a large apartment building or a townhouse where you share an electricity connection with your neighbours, smart meters should be installed in groups, to make the process as easy as possible for everyone. Because more meters are being replaced at the same time, there may be a longer period where you do not have electricity supply for the works to be completed. In addition to the notice that you will receive from your electricity company about meter replacement, you may also receive a notice informing you when your electricity supply will be interrupted for the installations.

Opting out and remote functions

- **Q: Do I have to have a smart meter?**
 - A: Yes. Customers are not able to opt-out of a new meter under the rules for the national rollout. If you prefer, you can ask your electricity company to install a smart meter with its remote communications turned off.
- **Q: What happens if I choose to turn off the remote communications function of my smart meter?**
 - A: If you ask for remote communications to be turned off, the meter will need to be read manually by a meter reader. This may mean your bills are sometimes based on estimates instead of actual usage and have to be corrected later. This might happen when the meter reader cannot access the meter to read it. Your electricity company may also include a fee for manual meter reads.

Turning off the remote communications functionality might also limit the types of electricity plans you can choose. Your electricity company can give you more information.

You can request this change either before installation or afterwards. If you decide after installation, your electricity company can send a technician to turn off the communications function, which may also involve a fee.
- **Q: Who do I contact if I have questions about my options?**
 - A: If you're unsure, or want to talk about your options, contact your electricity company using the contact details in your installation notice. Electricity companies are also sometimes called energy retailers.

Defect notices

- **Q: What happens if my smart meter can't be installed?**
 - A: Sometimes, installers find safety or other issues with existing meter boxes — like old wiring, asbestos or damaged covers that don't protect the wiring from the weather. These may need to be fixed before they can install a smart meter. If this happens, your installer may leave a note at your property about the issues they have identified, your options and next steps. Your electricity company may also contact you electronically to let you know. Under the national rollout, property owners cannot be forced to make repairs for a smart meter to be installed, providing there are no safety issues. If the property owner does not make the necessary repairs, the existing meter can continue to be used until it fails.
- **Q: Do I have to fix issues stopping a smart meter being installed?**
 - A: If your meter box or wiring is in very poor condition and could cause a fire, electric shock, or other safety risks, you may receive a notice about the defects that need to be fixed by an electrician to keep you safe and your electricity connected. If there is an immediate safety risk, your electricity may need to remain off until it can be fixed. However, if there is no safety risk and the issues only need to be fixed for a smart meter to be installed, you cannot be forced to make the repairs.
- **Q: Who pays the cost of fixing these issues?**
 - A: If you own the property, you are responsible for wiring and electrical fittings and the cost of an electrician to make repairs. If you rent, it is the responsibility of your landlord to address these issues.
- **Q: Who can I contact to fix any issues stopping my smart meter being installed?**
 - A: The smart meter installer or your electricity company can tell you what kind of electrician or other tradespeople are needed for your specific issue. Once the electrician or other tradespeople have finished the work, you just need to let your electricity company know. They will then schedule a new date to install the smart meter.

Post installation and ongoing use

Smart meters and electricity bills

- **Q: What happens to my electricity bill when I get a smart meter?**
 - A: Getting a smart meter will not automatically change the way you are charged for your electricity use. If you do notice unexpected changes in your bill, talk to your electricity company who can help work through it with you.
- **Q: Will my electricity plan change when I get a smart meter?**
 - A: Your electricity company cannot change the retail tariff structure in your electricity plan without your consent for two years after the smart meter is installed. This

protection applies for smart meters installed between 2025 and 2030 as part of the national rollout. This means, for example, that you cannot be changed from an electricity plan with a tariff where you are charged the same price for the electricity you use regardless of the time of day you use it (a flat rate tariff), to one where you are charged different prices depending on the time of the day (such as a time-of-use tariff).

- **Q: What is a retail tariff structure?**

- A: A tariff structure is how you're charged for the electricity you use. Common types of retail tariff structures include:
 - flat rate tariffs: you pay the same price for electricity, no matter the time of day
 - time-of-use tariffs: prices change depending on when you use electricity, often cheaper overnight or in the middle of the day, and more expensive during busy times like early evening
 - demand tariffs: these charge you for your highest electricity use at one time, measured in kilowatts (kW). It's a charge for using a lot of power all at once, like when you run several appliances together
 - controlled load tariffs: a separate, often cheaper, electricity rate for specific appliances like your hot water system or underfloor heating. They are connected to a dedicated circuit, separate from the rest of your home.

- **Q: Does this protection apply if I move into a new property?**

- A: No, your electricity company is not required to get your consent to move you to an electricity plan with a different tariff if you move into a property that already has a smart meter.

- **Q: Does this protection apply if I switch electricity companies?**

- A: No, if you change electricity companies after a smart meter is installed, your new electricity company is not required to get your consent to move you to an electricity plan with a different tariff.

- **Q: What happens after the two years?**

- A: After two years, your electricity company can move you to a different electricity plan, but they must give you notice and show you how the new plan compares to your current one, including your past bills. Visit energymadeeasy.gov.au to check the best electricity plans for you.

- **Q: Do the protections apply if a smart meter was installed before the national rollout started?**

- A: No, if a smart meter was installed at your property before 1 December 2025, your electricity company is not required to get your consent to move you to an electricity plan with a different tariff.

- **Q: Does this protection apply to electricity plans with controlled load tariffs?**
- A: Yes, some electricity plans include controlled load tariffs where you pay a different price for electricity for some appliances. These often include off-peak hot water, slab or underfloor heating, or pool pumps set to run during off-peak hours, usually overnight.
- **Q: How can a smart meter help me access electricity plans with different retail tariff structures?**
 - A: Smart meters record your electricity use throughout the day, which means you may be able to access a type of plan that allows you to pay different prices for electricity depending on the time of day you use it. These might be called time-of-use, controlled load or demand tariff plans. If you're on this type of plan, you might save money by using electricity when it costs less.
- **Q: What about other changes to my electricity plan?**
 - A: Your electricity plan may have special conditions, such as discounts or benefits that are only for a set period. When these expire, your electricity company must notify you of these changes. Talk to your electricity company if you have questions about changes to your plan or want to discuss your options.
- **Q: Where can I find more information about different electricity plans?**
 - A: You can talk to your electricity company or visit the independent government website: energymadeeasy.gov.au.

Estimated bills

- **Q: What are estimated bills?**
 - A: In the past, if the meter couldn't be read — because of pets, locked gates, bad weather or other reasons — your bill might be based on an estimate. Estimated bills might have been higher or lower than what you actually used, and you would then be sent a “corrected” bill later. Smart meters send your electricity readings to your electricity company, meaning no more bills that are later corrected because the meter reader couldn't access the meter.
- **Q: Why did I get an estimated bill after a smart meter was installed?**
 - A: After the smart meter is installed, your electricity bill may sometimes include very short time periods where your electricity use is estimated. This could happen if, for example, there is a temporary communications issue between the smart meter and your electricity company — such as an issue with the signal. This isn't the same type of “estimated” bill you used to get before you had a smart meter — you won't get a corrected bill at a later date and have to pay a different amount.

If you have any questions about your bill, contact your electricity company who can work through it with you.

Data access, protection and privacy

- **Q: How do I request my electricity usage data?**
 - A: You can ask your electricity company to give you information about your energy usage. To find out how to make a request, visit their website or contact them directly.
- **Q: Are there other ways my electricity company might already provide my electricity data?**
 - A: Yes, many electricity companies already offer ways to track your electricity use through their mobile apps or online customer portals.
- **Q: Can I share my smart meter data with other service providers?**
 - A: You can give other companies permission to access your data if they offer services that help you save electricity, get better deals, or manage your electricity use. This could include:
 - apps that analyse your electricity use
 - solar power installer
 - companies that help you compare electricity plans.
- **Q: Is my energy data and personal information protected?**
 - A: Yes, your energy data and personal information are protected by law. Smart meter data is treated as confidential information under the National Electricity Rules.
- **Q: Are there rules about who can access my data?**
 - A: Yes, there are strict rules to stop anyone from accessing your data without your authorisation. Currently, only registered energy companies, like your electricity company or meter provider, are allowed to access your meter data.
- **Q: How do I make the most of a smart meter and its data?**
 - A: Ways to make the most of the smart meter include:
 - use an app or online portal — many electricity companies provide these options so you can track your electricity use and find ways to save energy
 - choose from a wider range of electricity plans that may better suit your needs — for more information about electricity plans you can talk to your electricity company or visit the independent government website energymadeeasy.gov.au.
 - plan for new technology — your historical electricity data can help you explore the type and size of the solar panels, batteries and other energy technologies that best meet your needs.

Health and Safety

- **Q: Are smart meters safe for my health?**

- A: Smart meter technology is safe. The smart meters being installed as part of the national rollout use mobile phone networks to send meter readings. The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) mandates that they meet strict health and safety standards, which are set by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA). For more information, including fact sheets about common communications technologies and radiofrequency radiation, visit the ARPANSA website: www.arpansa.gov.au, and the ACMA website: www.acma.gov.au

Who can I contact for support?

- **Q: I have a question about my smart meter or its installation. Who should I contact?**

- A: Your electricity company can help you with questions about the smart meter, the installation process or your electricity bill. Their contact details will be on your regular electricity bills as well as in the notice they will send you in the mail or electronically before the smart meter installation. Electricity companies are sometimes also called energy retailers.

- **Q: What if I have a complaint?**

- A: Start by contacting your electricity company. The installation notice they sent you explains how to make a complaint. It's best to try to fix the issue with them first. If the problem isn't solved, or you're not happy with their response, you can contact the independent energy ombudsman in your state for help.
- Details of the Energy Ombudsman can be found here:

State	Ombudsman	Telephone	Website
Australian Capital Territory	ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal	02 6207 1740	www.acat.act.gov.au