Residential customers in embedded networks

Do you purchase electricity directly from the owner or manager of your site? From 1 December 2017, you can now choose to purchase your electricity directly from an energy retailer of your choice instead of your current provider.

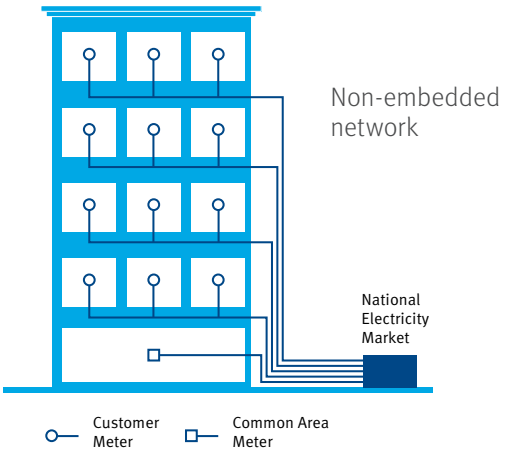
Embedded networks

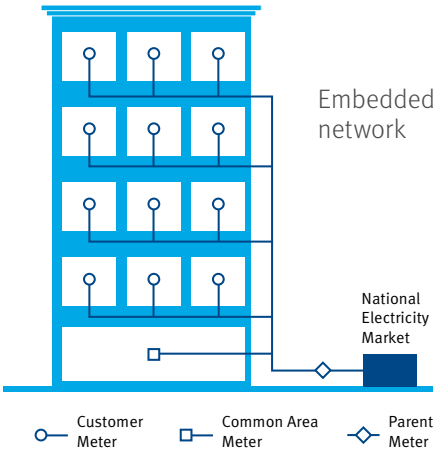
An embedded network is a small electricity system that distributes electricity exclusively to homes or businesses within a specific property or area — for example, an apartment building, caravan park or retirement village.

Embedded networks are supplied through a connection point (parent meter) to the wider distribution network (e.g. electricity grid). The operator of an embedded network buys electricity in bulk and then on-sells the electricity to each connection (premises) inside the embedded network.

In most cases, each occupant's consumption is individually metered using a sub-meter.

The electricity distributor and the site owner are responsible for the supply of electricity to you (including the quality and reliability of the electricity supplied) and the connection of the residential complex or building to the distribution network. The site owner incurs distribution charges from the local distributor for connection to the grid for all customers in the embedded network. This external network cost is usually passed on to all the respective customers, and is often referred to as a 'supply charge' or 'network charge ' on your bill.





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Your energy rights

Every customer in an embedded network has the right to purchase their electricity from an authorised retailer if they choose to do so and providing the retailer is willing to make them an offer. It would be a breach of the Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) exemption conditions if a site owner restricts this.

Once you accept an offer from an electricity retailer, your site owner will engage an Embedded Network Manager (ENM). The purpose of the ENM is to facilitate the transfer of an embedded network customer from the site owner to a chosen retailer.

Remember you have 10 days to change your mind (the 'cooling off' period).

If you're not happy with your new retailer, you can go back to purchasing from your site owner. Contact your retailer if you wish to return to your site owner. Exit fees and early termination fees in Queensland are capped at $20.

Tips for choosing or changing electricity retailers

- **Check your meter:** Ask your site owner whether it was installed after 1 January 2012. If it was, it's likely to be compliant and you won't have to install a new one.
- **Shop around and save:** do I need to consider switching from my current provider to an electricity retailer – or can my existing provider give me a better deal?
- **Compare electricity deals:** make sure you look at your last electricity bills to see how much you used and paid. You can also compare electricity details on the 'Energy Made Easy' price comparison website at www.energymadeeasy.gov.au
- **Read the conditions:** If you have been offered a discount, make sure you're aware of any conditions that are attached. For example, some discounts are linked to 'paying on time' or 'paying online'.
- **Check the payment terms:** Some plans offer flexible payment options such as monthly billing.
- **Cooling off period:** After you have entered into a new market contract, you have 10 days to change your mind.

Public register of authorised retailers – www.aer.gov.au/retail-markets/authorisations/public-register-of-authorised-retailers-and-authorisation-applications

Electricity rebates and concessions

If you buy your electricity from an authorised energy retailer, you will have access to all the protections that retailers are obliged to provide retail customers under the National Energy Retail Law and National Energy Retail Rules, including, if you are eligible, Queensland Government electricity rebates and concessions.

Access to feed-in tariffs for solar

For any existing or new systems that have or will be installed with the site owner's permission, retail feed-in tariffs for your excess solar PV generation will depend on your metering configuration and the chosen retailer's offer.

Installing a solar or battery system

These new changes do not explicitly prevent you from installing a solar PV or battery system. However, residents who are expressing an interest in installing these systems require permission to do so from the site owner. Contact your site owner before installing these systems.

Questions to ask your site owner or body corporate

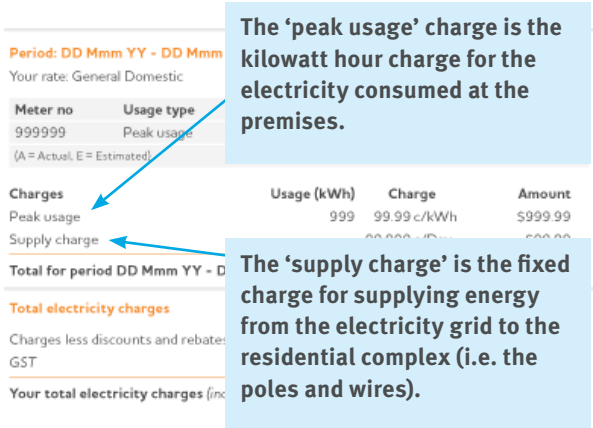
If you are considering switching to an electricity retailer, you should first ask the site owner or body corporate of the premises, if your meter is suitable to access offers directly from retailers, i.e. is it compliant with the National Electricity Market and can it be assigned a National Metering Identifier?

Not all metering equipment is capable of this, and many existing embedded network metering installations do not meet this requirement. Talk to your site owner or tenancy manager to find out. You should also ask if there are any other technical issues you need to be aware of, for example if further upgrades of metering infrastructure or internal wiring is required. However, you no longer need to 'wire-out' of the private network in order to access a retailer.

Questions to ask an electricity retailer

Firstly, you should let the electricity retailer know you are in an embedded network and whether your meter is suitable. If your meter is not suitable, ask the retailer what it would cost to install a new one.

If you decide to purchase your electricity from a retailer instead of the site owner, you should check your network or supply charges are being charged correctly. The example retail bill below indicates the types of charges for a typical residential customer.



Network or supply charges are the fixed part of supplying energy from the electricity grid to the residential complex where you live. The way these charges are applied may vary:

- Normally, the site owner pays these charges and will then bill you for your share, which is sometimes incorporated into your cents per kilowatt hour charge.
- However, your chosen retailer may have an arrangement in place with the site owner to include the network/supply charge on your bill as in the above example, however if this is not in place, you may also receive a separate bill for this charge from your site owner.

To make it easier to compare offers from retailers with your current provider, ask the retailer to give you an energy only, or cents per kilowatt hour offer.

Further information

General information for energy customers in embedded networks – https://www.dews.qld.gov.au/electricity/embedded-networks/electricity-customers-in-embedded-networks

Electricity rebates and concessions – www.qld.gov.au/community/cost-of-living-support/electricity-gas-rebates

Resources to help you shop around and change your electricity provider – www.aer.gov.au/consumers/aer-resources#factsheets

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