

Frequently Asked Questions



About Energy Ahead

1. Who funds Energy Ahead?

Energy Ahead is a \$10.8 million commitment of the Western Australian Climate Policy and is delivered in the South West Interconnected System (SWIS) by Synergy and the Financial Wellbeing Collective.

2. I want to do the program but I'm embarrassed. Won't they judge me and just tell me to turn the TV off?

Our trained Energy Coaches are understanding and compassionate and want to support you to help reduce your electricity bills in a way that works for you and your needs

3. Can I talk with my Energy Coach after the audit for a follow up?

We will provide you with a customised report and action plan after your audit with lots of tips and resources to keep you on track with your energy use. Your Energy Coach will not be contactable for follow-up questions after your household audit. However, if you have any queries in regards to energy efficiency, please feel free to contact Synergy on 13 13 53.

4. Am I eligible to have an Energy Coach visit me to help me?

If you are a Synergy residential customer and have an account in your name and are happy to give your consent to the program, visit thefwc.org.au/energyahead to apply.

5. I am not comfortable with someone coming into my home to do an energy audit. Is there any other way?

Yes, we can discuss this and arrange a virtual audit or a series of phone coaching sessions. Coaches can guide you through the process to obtain the information they need.

6. What areas do you cover?

The service is available for in home audits, virtual or phone coaching throughout the SWIS region from Kalbarri in the north to Albany in the south and Kalgoorlie in the east.

7. Will you be going in to all the bedrooms during the visit?

We will only go where you are comfortable. Our Coaches are flexible and are there to help you.

8. I cannot be home during 9am-5pm. Can you come after or before that time?

The Energy Ahead service operates Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. You, or an authorised representative, need to be at home at a time of your choosing during these hours or available for a series of phone coaching sessions.

Bill Related

- 9. Why hasn't my electricity bill gone down?**
It may be too early to see the results of your choices, perhaps wait until your next bill to see the results.
- 10. How do I talk with Synergy about my bill?**
Contact Synergy on **13 13 53**. Let them know if you are suffering financial hardship.
<https://www.synergy.net.au/Your-home/Manage-account/Need-help-with-your-bill/Financial-hardship-support>
- 11. If I do it and it doesn't reduce my electricity costs, what then? Will I be cut off?**
The program is there to support and help you and is not a last resort before being disconnected.

- 12. Will I get help with my power bill?**
Your Energy Coach will be able to directly assist with tips and information to help you better manage your energy use to help reduce your power bill.
- 13. How else can I tell if my energy bills are average?**
Our Energy Coaches can help you access your My Synergy account and show you how to use the site. Your My Synergy account has lots of helpful resources, including the ability to compare your household's energy use with a similar house in your neighbourhood.

Also see this helpful article:

<https://www.synergy.net.au/Blog/2023/01/Average-electricity-bill>

Power Usage Related

- 14. What uses the most power in the house?**
Generally speaking, heating and cooling will use the most power, followed by general appliances such as the fridge or freezer.

Also see this helpful article:
<https://www.synergy.net.au/Blog/2022/10/Electricity-hungry-appliances>
- 15. Someone in my household needs medical support machine/s which uses a lot of power and I cannot reduce the use of it.**
Our Energy Coaches can talk to you about some of the options available and where to go for further information.
- 16. Does a toaster/kettle/microwave use a lot of power?**
Yes, but only for a very short period.
- 17. The kids use a lot of 'gadgets' in their rooms. Do these use much electricity?**
Some do, some don't. Our Coaches can check each device's power usage with a tool called a Power-Mate to find out your device's usage.
- 18. Are my entertainment devices using much electricity whilst on standby power?**
Late model smart TVs (especially if they are LED/LCD ones) only use a small amount of electricity on standby. Older TVs and a soundbar or two can use quite a bit more on standby. Our Coaches can check each device's power usage with a tool called a Power-Mate to find out your device's usage.

Cost Saving

19. What are some basic tips to save money?

- Only turn your dishwasher or washing machine on when it has a full (not over-full) load - it uses the about the same power to wash a single item as a whole load.
- Turn lights off when leaving the home.
- Turn the hot-water cylinder off if you are not going to be at home for days or months at a time.
- Dry your clothes on a line or a drying rack using the warm air/sun, instead of a dryer.
- If you have one, use an air-fryer or microwave instead of an oven for small items - you will be using only the energy for cooking and not just 'getting up to temperature'.

Also see this helpful article:

<https://www.synergy.net.au/Your-home/Energy-tips/Energy-saving-tips>

20. Is it worth getting an air fryer? Are they much cheaper to run than an electric oven?

On average, Air fryers cost less than half as much to run as an oven.

21. How can I stop the hot summer sun hitting my east and west windows? I am in a rental property and am not allowed to attach anything to the house.

Use bulldog clips to fasten some shade cloth to the gutter outside the window - making sure the cloth is long enough that you are able to hold it on the ground with bricks or stones.

22. Is there a cheap way I can keep myself cool on super-hot days when my pedestal fan just seems to blow around hot air?

- Portable evaporative coolers work well on those sorts of days. They are significantly more affordable to run than portable refrigerative coolers.

- If you put ice blocks in the water holding container, then the air comes out slightly refrigerated.
- **Point worth noting:** Don't expect a portable evaporative cooler to cool down the space you're sitting in - it won't. They must be pointing at you while you're sitting close to them. That's the difference between refrigerative and evaporative air conditioners - refrigerative air cons cool the space of the room, whereas evaporative air cons cool down the skin as the air passes over you.

23. I was thinking about getting an electric blanket but have been told they are expensive to run.

There are many electric blankets that are cost efficient to run. Ask your Energy Coach for their advice on which one to get.

24. How can I get the best out of my solar?

Where possible do all your heavy electricity loads between 8am and 4pm.

Examples:

- Washing clothes
- Cooking
- Heating and cooling the house
- Heating water
- If you have solar water, turn the booster off from Sep-Apr

25. Is it cheaper to run a gas heater in the winter?

Yes. Gas heaters are generally cheaper to run than electric heaters. Our Energy Coaches can help you figure out the best way to heat and cool your house.