

THE Daily Telegraph

A strong motive to switch providers --- Fight for power

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299 words

11 October 2010

THE number of people trying to change power companies has tripled in three months.

The website switchwise.com.au, which helps consumers change to cheaper plans, said 100,000 people a month had contacted their website looking to change providers.

Tim Wolfensen, CEO of electricity price monitor makeitcheaper.com.au, said at some times of day Sydneysiders could pay more than 30c per kWh. In Melbourne it can be as little as 15c.

Once they hit 1750 kWh per quarter -- average for a typical family household -- Sydneysiders with EnergyAustralia have their charges jacked up by 50 per cent to 28c per kWh.

In Melbourne they pay no more than 19.8c.

EnergyAustralia said the jump discouraged excessive energy use and usage charges were offset by a lower supply charge of 47c a day compared to 69c a day for CitiPower customers in Melbourne.

Mr Wolfensen said his site was getting up to 5000 hits a day, triple the number of hits three months ago.

He said the massive increase came as people opened their first bills since July 1, when the new prices came into effect.

``There's three key triggers: when the new prices are announced; when they are implemented; and where you actually need to stick your hand in your wallet and pay for them," he said.

``The most painful is the last one. People realise this is happening, this is real, the price increases are here."

An EnergyAustralia spokesman said average customers were better off financially, despite the higher price of electricity itself, because of the lower supply charges.

However the distributor has asked to pass on the cost of an infrastructure upgrade, which the Energy and Water Ombudsman said would further increase prices.