

## NEWS

# ELECTRICITY SHOCK: Your power bill is about to go up



Eliza Wheeler | 29th Mar 2016 6:21 AM Updated: 7:31 AM



Everyone on the Fraser Coast can expect an electricity price rise from July 1 this year, but small business owners and irrigating farmers are in for the biggest shock.

Tracey Joynson

EVERYONE on the Fraser Coast can expect an electricity price rise from July 1 this year, but small business owners and irrigating farmers are in for the biggest shock.

The recently released Queensland Competition Authority (QCA) draft decision on regulated retail electricity prices shows the average Fraser Coast resident can expect a 0.6% increase in their power bill, small businesses can expect a 9.3% increase, and large businesses including farmers who use irrigators can expect an increase of up to 10.6%.

For the average cane grower, the 10.6% increase will mean their annual power bill will go up almost \$50,000.

Ross Anderson from Aqua Gold Energy Solutions said a 10% price increase for Fraser Coast farmers could be the difference between families having enough money for food, or going hungry.

"It's a massive impact for them (growers)," Mr Anderson said.

"For some it may be the difference between putting food on the table or not."

As growers on the Fraser Coast face a hot, dry autumn, many have no choice but to irrigate their crops.

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Grower Daryl Cronan uses an irrigator to water his cane in Yerra, and said high electricity prices were a concern for him and fellow cane growers in the region.

"It's out of control - no two ways about it," Mr Cronan said.

He said growers in the region were reliant on their irrigators.

"The heat's still here and we're not wet enough, we got 70-90mm over the weekend but I'd like to see another 50mm in a week if we could get it," he said.

Kawungan mum Jessica Wheeler may not have a cane field to water, but with 10 children, her power bill is already a worry.

"The latest bill I got was just under \$2000," Ms Wheeler said.

"It's a massive worry - if we have to fork out thousands of dollars, we might not be able to go on a holiday like we planned, or see where else we can save."

In a recent statement addressing the proposed increase, peak body Canegrowers CEO Dan Galligan said the possible hikes showed the electricity pricing system was "broken".

"Prices are out of control," Mr Galligan said.

When announcing the proposed prices, energy minister Mark Bailey said price increases were inevitable.

"As economic activity increases, so does power consumption which has an impact on generation costs," Mr Bailey said.

The final price rises will be announced by May 31.

**How do you cut back on the cost of your bill? Join the discussion and share your tips below.**

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