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Buyer beware - huge differences in Geelong utilities prices

Wallets zapped

CARL DICKENS

GEELONG families could be saving hundreds of dollars a year on electricity just by switching providers, a private power comparison company said yesterday.

Electricity and gas comparison website Switchwise.com.au yesterday released findings of a survey of homes in Powercor's City of Greater Geelong distribution zone.

For the average Geelong household, the cheapest electricity plan was \$1415, 16.8 per cent less than the dearest plan at \$1653, the survey found.

Switchwise.com.au founder

Shaun Johnson said houses that bundled their electricity and gas with one supplier were saving up to \$400 annually.

Mr Johnson said many residents were unaware of the significance of the diversity of providers available to them.

"One thing people should be aware of is there's a choice of 14 power companies in Victoria," he said.

"Since the start of last year, we've been the only state in Australia where the Government's removed the price caps, so as a result, all the

companies are setting up their own base prices."

"Shop around a bit and make sure that whoever you're with, you're actually getting a good deal."

Mr Johnson also said switching between energy suppliers was nowhere near as complex as it seemed.

"Changing your electricity or gas supplier doesn't mean changing anything physical, you're not tearing up cables or changing wires, all you're actually doing is changing the company that sends you your bill. The supply companies don't own any of the wires;

that's set up separately by distributors - we get asked about that a lot. Plus, suppliers don't charge you to transfer from one supplier to the other."

Mr Johnson said other ways Geelong households could cut back their power bills included turning off electrical appliances on standby at the wall, turning down the heating a degree or two during winter, and turning air conditioning up a degree or two during summer.

"Those things can make a big difference in the long run," he said.