

SWITCH SAVINGS



Power to save

Energy costs are rising, so what can homeowners do to cut their bills? **Kylie Adoranti** reports

THE cost of power went up in January, and again in July.

Water and gas prices are also on the rise.

But there are some simple things people can do in their own home to save money.

Home sustainability assessor Graeme Ambrose said the number of people coming to him for power-saving tips had increased.

"I show people how to understand why their heating bills are so high and what they can do to fix it," he said.

Mr Ambrose said it was important for people to be aware of the energy they use in their homes.

It's the little things people can do that can save them hundreds of dollars.

"It is education, behaviour change, even small things like a slow cooker," he said.

"If you slow cook on low, for six hours, you would use less energy than heating your oven and cooking with it."

He said one "old trick" to save on gas bills was to go outside and check the settings on the gas hot water service.

"Most plumbers put the settings on seven – or the maximum setting. Drop it down to three or mid-range."

Saving on water used in the home was simple, too, Mr Ambrose said.

"Put aerating filters under your taps so you don't use as much water. You can take shorter showers and shave in front of a mirror rather than under the shower."

Mr Ambrose said outside the home people could use mulch around their trees and plants so less water was required.

"And don't cut the lawn so short, otherwise you will need more water to keep it growing and healthy."

He said he used 4kW of energy a day, compared with the 16kW of most homes.

Langwarrin's Nicola Oldridge has made some changes in her home that saved her a lot of money.

Ms Oldridge stopped using her clothes dryer and now uses a clothes horse instead. She also stopped using her oven and bought a portable convection oven.

"That really saved me heaps, and time as well."

She said since implementing small changes in her home, she had saved about \$1600 a year.

Mr Ambrose runs Ecodecisions, a company that shows businesses and households what they can do to become more energy efficient.

Go to ecodecisions.com.au for more information.

LAUNDRY

■ Try to use the clothes dryer as little as possible. Invest in a clothes horse instead.

■ Wash clothes in cold water instead of warm.



BATHROOM

■ Fix dripping taps. A hot water tap dripping at the rate of one drip a second can waste up to \$25 worth of hot water in a year.

■ Use cold water when possible.

■ Use the bathroom plug when shaving or washing.

■ Buy a water-saving shower head.

■ Take four-minute showers.



LOUNGE ROOM

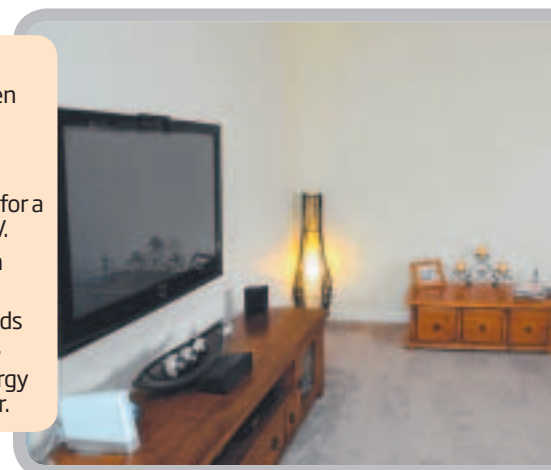
■ Turn the lights off when leaving a room.

■ Turn power off at the power point when an appliance won't be used for a few hours such as the TV.

■ Use a fan instead of an air conditioner.

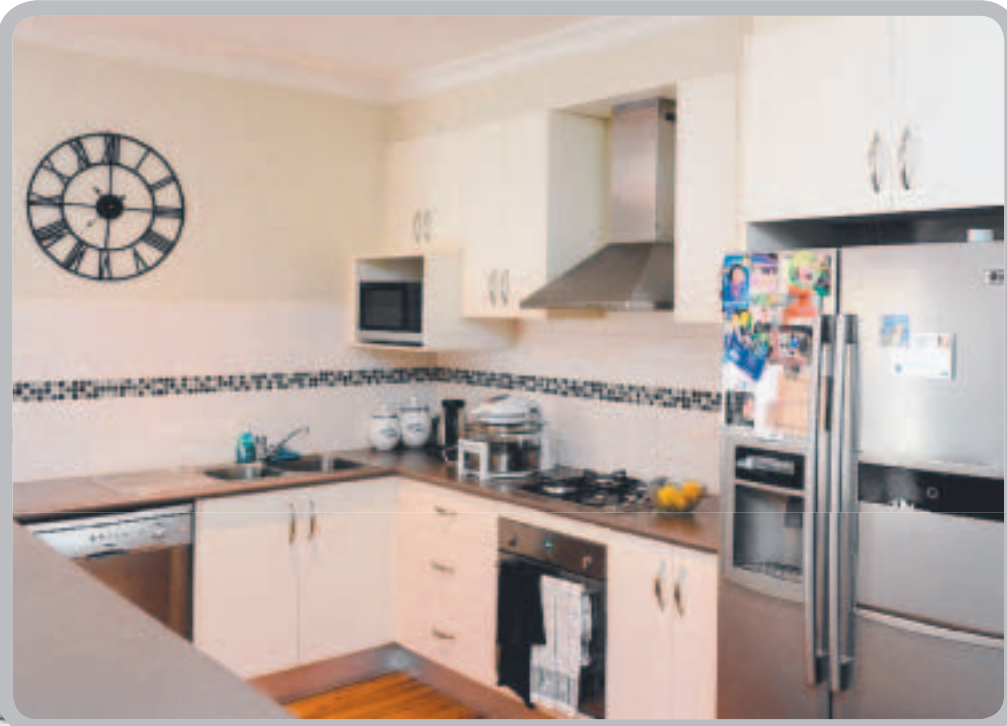
■ Thick curtains and blinds help insulate your home.

■ A laptop uses less energy than a desktop computer.



A portable convection oven uses electricity more efficiently than a standard oven.





KITCHEN

- When cooking pasta, it is cheaper and more efficient to boil the electric kettle first and pour the water into the saucepan rather than heating it up on the gas.
- Try using a portable convection oven instead of the oven. Convection ovens use half the power and cook in half the time.
- Use a slow cooker for your roasts. It uses less energy than you would pre-heating a conventional oven.
- Only run the dishwasher with a full load.
- Turn off the beer fridge. An old beer fridge can cost you about \$1000 a year to run.
- Microwaves can cook food three times faster than a standard oven while using up to 70 per cent less electricity.
- The ideal temperature setting on a fridge is 4 degrees.
- Put aerating filters under your taps so you don't use as much water.
- Check your hot water gas service outside, and set to minimum or mid-range settings instead of high settings.

SOURCE: GRAEME AMBROSE, ECODECISIONS



Graeme Ambrose shows Nicola Oldridge the remote used to switch off power.
Pictures: JASON EDWARDS N35DV700