

POWER BUDDY

INDEPENDENT · NZ-OWNED

2026 ESSENTIALS EDITION

Home Energy Handbook

Practical, plain-English advice for warmer, cheaper Kiwi homes.

Free · NZ-owned

Plain English

No sales calls

mypowerbuddy.co.nz

A free 8-page guide. Print it, share it, keep it on the fridge.

Edition May 2026



WELCOME

Kia ora.

Power bills, heat pumps, hot water, solar — there's a lot of noise out there, and most of it is trying to sell you something. This little booklet isn't.

It's the short, friendly version of what we've learned helping thousands of Kiwi households get warmer, drier homes for less money. No jargon. No upsells. Just the things we'd tell a mate over a cuppa.

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Why we made this free

Power Buddy is NZ-owned. We don't sell power, heat pumps or solar — so we've got nothing to push you towards. We make a small fee only if you choose to book one of our vetted local installers. Share this booklet with anyone who'd find it useful — that's exactly why it exists.



CHAPTER 1 · YOUR POWER BILL

What you're actually paying for.

Power bills look complicated, but underneath they're just two numbers: a small amount you pay **every day** (whether you use power or not), and a slightly bigger amount you pay for **each unit of power you use**. Everything else — discounts, GST, prompt-payment — is dressing.

1

Two prices, not one

Every plan has a daily charge plus a per-unit rate. Cheap-looking plans often hide a high daily charge.

2

Pick low-user or standard

Small homes & light users want low-user plans. Bigger families with electric heating usually save on standard.

3

Re-shop every year

Most of us drift onto a worse deal without noticing. A 5-minute check once a year pays for itself many times over.

REAL KIWI HOMES

Mike & Aroha in Hamilton checked their plan on Powerswitch one rainy Sunday. Twenty minutes later they'd switched to a different retailer with the same reliability — and saved **\$386 in the first year**. Same power, same house, cheaper bill.

The single best free thing you can do this week

Pop your address into powerswitch.org.nz (run by Consumer NZ). It's the gold standard for comparing power plans, it's genuinely free, and there are no sales calls. Most Kiwi households who switch save **\$200–\$400 a year**. We recommend it even though we don't make a cent from it.



CHAPTER 2 · HEATING

Warm without the wallet sting.

A modern heat pump is the best deal in home heating. For every dollar of power you put in, it gives you about **three or four dollars' worth of warmth**. That's why almost every Kiwi home is moving to one.

But here's the thing nobody tells you: getting it **right-sized** matters more than the brand on the wall.

1

Don't go too big

Oversized heat pumps blast on, then off, then on again. Noisier, less comfortable, and quietly more expensive to run.

2

Set it and leave it

Pick a comfy temperature (most people land around 19–21°C) and let it tick along. Don't crank it to 28°C when you walk in.

3

Place it well

Aim the head into the room where people sit, not at a wall a metre away. One well-placed unit beats three poorly-placed ones.

REAL KIWI HOMES

The Patel family in Christchurch were quoted a 9 kW unit for their lounge. A second opinion from Power Buddy's sizer suggested 6 kW would do nicely for their well-insulated room. They saved **\$1,800 on the install** and the smaller unit runs more efficiently in mild weather.

Get a free sanity-check on any heat pump quote

Our **Heat Pump Sizer** at mypowerbuddy.co.nz/heat-pump-sizer tells you the right size for your room based on NZ climate zones — in about a minute. Take the result to your installer. It's the easiest way to make sure you're not being upsold.



CHAPTER 3 · HOT WATER

The quiet third of your power bill.

Hot water is roughly **30% of the average Kiwi power bill** — usually second only to space heating. The cylinder you choose now will run for 15+ years. Worth getting right.

- 1 Heat pump cylinders win**
They use about a third of the power of an old-style cylinder. Costs more upfront, pays back in 4–7 years, then keeps saving.
- 2 Gas is fading fast**
Mains gas prices in NZ are climbing and many networks are winding down. If your gas heater is on the way out, electric is usually the smart replacement.
- 3 Size for your household**
Two people need a much smaller cylinder than five. Too small means cold showers; too big means heating water you don't use.

REAL KIWI HOMES

The Williams family in Tauranga (two parents, three teens) replaced an aging 180 L resistance cylinder with a 250 L hot-water heat pump. Their power bill dropped **about \$640 a year** — and the showers stopped running cold during morning rush hour.

If your cylinder is 15+ years old, this is your biggest opportunity

Replacing a tired cylinder with a hot-water heat pump is usually the single highest-return upgrade in the house. Our free **Hot Water Sizer** (mypowerbuddy.co.nz/hot-water-sizer) compares your options for your household size and shows the realistic payback.



CHAPTER 4 · SOLAR & BATTERY

Is it worth it for you?

Solar works in New Zealand — yes, even in Wellington and Dunedin. But the industry has a reputation for over-promising. Here's the honest version, no marketing spin.

1

Panels: 6–9 year payback

A typical home install pays itself off in about 6 to 9 years. After that, the panels keep generating free power for another 15+ years.

2

Batteries: a comfort buy

Batteries usually take 10–15 years to pay back on their own. Worth it for backup power and EV charging — not just for the savings.

3

The buyback is the lever

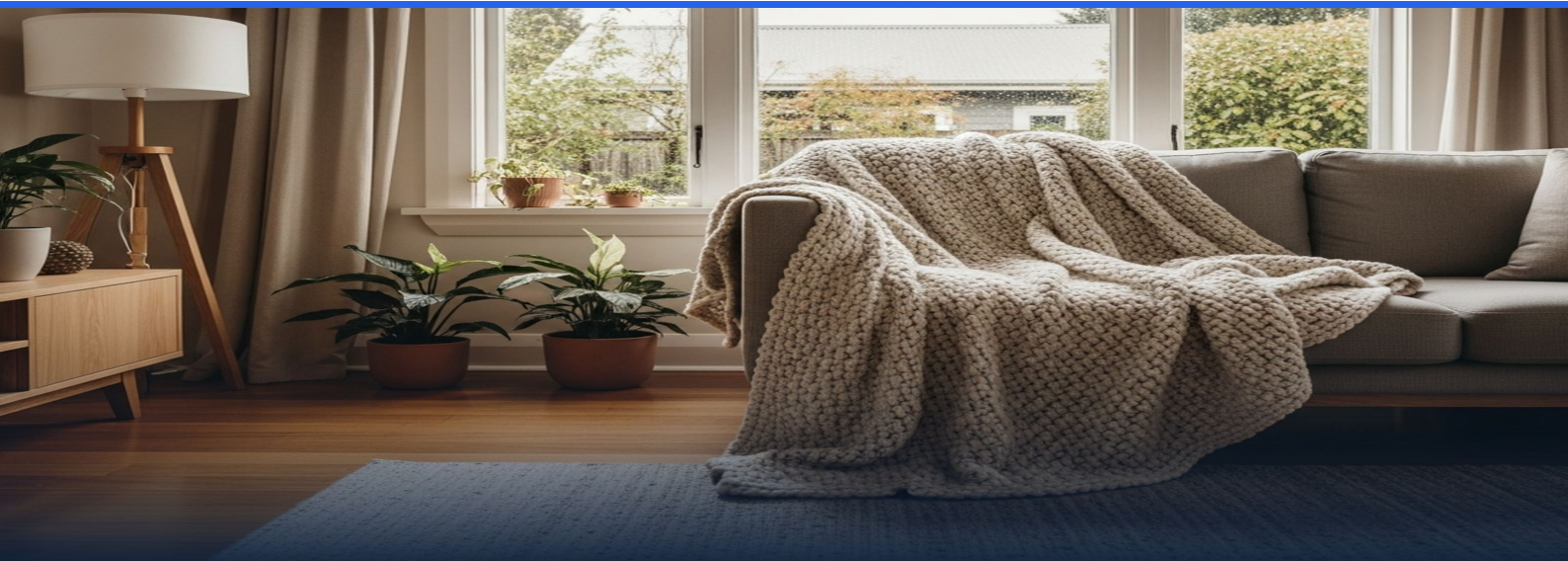
What your retailer pays for your spare solar varies **five-fold**. The right plan can double your savings without changing a single panel.

REAL KIWI HOMES

Sarah in Nelson got three solar quotes — they ranged from \$14,000 to \$22,000 for almost identical systems. She used Power Buddy's solar tool to sense-check her chosen quote and switched her power plan to one with a much better solar buyback rate. Estimated payback: **just under 7 years**, instead of 11.

Always get three quotes — and pair the install with a plan switch

A solar quote without a buyback-rate strategy is half a quote. Our solar tool at mypowerbuddy.co.nz/solar shows realistic payback for your roof and compares buyback rates across all NZ retailers.



CHAPTER 5 · THE WHOLE HOME

Warm, dry & ready for an EV.

A warm, dry home with the right charging setup beats a cold, damp home with a fancy heat pump. None of these are glamorous — they're just where the highest returns hide.

Warmth from the top down

Ceiling insulation is by far the cheapest big win. If yours is thin, lumpy or older than the kids, topping it up usually pays back in 3–5 years.

Walls and underfloor are next on the list. Double glazing is lovely for comfort but slow to pay back as a stand-alone retrofit — do it during a renovation, not on its own.

Damp homes cost more to heat. Check that bathroom and kitchen extract fans vent **outside**, not into the roof, and open windows for 10 minutes a day in winter.

Charging an EV at home

A plain three-pin plug works fine if you only do short trips. For most families a **7 kW wallbox** (about the size of a shoe box on the garage wall) gives you a full charge overnight, every night. Anything bigger is overkill in a normal home.

Pair an EV with a **night-rate plan** from your power retailer (several offer 8–12c/unit overnight). Charging at home then becomes roughly **\$2–\$3 per 100 km** — about a quarter the cost of petrol.

Building or renovating? Run a 32 mm conduit from the switchboard to the garage wall now — it costs almost nothing during the build.

Want a free room-by-room walk-through of your home?

Our **Free Home Audit** at mypowerbuddy.co.nz/audit is a 20-point friendly walk-through that pinpoints exactly where your home is leaking heat, energy and money. Takes about 8 minutes. You get a personalised report with prioritised actions and realistic costs — no sales calls, ever.



CHAPTER 6 · TAKE ACTION

Your 30-day quick-win checklist.

Tick a handful of these off in the next month and most Kiwi homes will be **\$300–\$600 a year better off** — for a few hours' effort.

- Compare your power plan on Powerswitch this week (powerswitch.org.nz)
- Set the heat pump to 19–21°C and leave it running through the cold months
- Top up ceiling insulation if it's thin or older than the kids
- Replace your hot water cylinder if it's 15+ years old — consider a heat pump cylinder
- Swap any remaining halogen or incandescent bulbs to LEDs
- Draught-stop external doors and windows (\$50–\$100 of foam strip)
- If you've got an EV, move to a night-rate plan
- Get a solar quote (and a buyback-rate comparison) if you're staying 7+ years
- Run a Free Home Audit at mypowerbuddy.co.nz/audit
- Pass this booklet to a friend who's building or renovating

About Power Buddy

Power Buddy is New Zealand's free, independent home energy advisor. We don't sell power, heat pumps or solar — we help you decide what's right for your home and connect you with vetted local installers if you want one. We make a small fee only when you book a job through one of those installers. We never sell your data.

Free tools at mypowerbuddy.co.nz: Free Home Audit · Heat Pump Sizer · Hot Water Sizer · Solar & Battery · New Builds Advisor · Vetted Installer Directory