

# Interview guide

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## Participation information

Thank you for participating in this interview. During it, we will be asking you questions, and getting you to complete some tasks. It will take around 30 minutes, and we will give you a \$60 gift voucher after it is finished.

We'd like to assure you that any information we collect during it is for research purposes only. All aspects of it are strictly confidential, and you will not be identified in our report.

## About us

This interview is being conducted by the social research company the Behavioural Insights Team for an Australian Government agency.

# Questions

## Warm up/intro

Have you seen any energy ads lately?

What sorts of energy ads do you recall seeing or hearing? [Prompts: television, print, radio, online]

When did you last change energy providers? What was your process for doing this?

[Prompts: did you contact an energy company, did they contact you?]

Have you considered changing providers (or changing plans) in the past 12 months?

What factors did you consider, and how did you go about getting information?

## Main task

*Go through a few different examples of ads, and ask some questions.*

What do you think about this ad? [Prompts: is the ad easy or difficult to understand?]

What do you think the ad is trying to say?

Could you explain the offer to someone else?

## Reference price

*Take the ads away from the interviewee before asking these questions. NB ads will show varied alternative wording to the reference price. Vary/test different terms during interviews.*

What do you think the 'X price' is? [note what they say]

- Do you expect this is what you will pay? [probe]

How do you think the X price is calculated?

- Do you think that the X price is calculated in relation to your usage? [probe]
- What purpose do you think the X price serves?

A couple of the ads talked about a X price.

- Do you think they are talking about the same price?
- Who do you think determines the X price?
- How do you think the X price is calculated?

[At this point, explain the reference price]

## **Alternative framing**

What would you call something like that?

What sort of terms do you think would help you understand this term?

How would you explain this concept to a friend?

What would you think if it was called: [*choose terms which are different to the alternative term used in the questions above*]

- Standard price
- Guideline price
- Starting point price
- Default price
- Base price
- Basic price
- Set base price
- Comparison price
- Anchor price
- Australian Energy Regulator [..... price]

### Unconditional percentage (don't refer to by name in interview)

*Show another ad or go back to a previous one*

A number of the ads said that the plan was 'X% less/more than the reference price'. What do you think that means?

If the percentage in this ad said X% instead of Y%, would this mean that the offer was cheaper or more expensive?

How do you think this percentage is calculated?

Do you think that all the companies work out the percentage in the same way? [Prompt if interviewee starts talking about the literal steps for calculation: What is each company's percentage made up of?]

[At this point, explain the unconditional price]

### **Alternative framing**

What would you call something like that?

What sort of terms do you think would help you understand this term?

How would you explain this concept to a friend?

What would you think if it was called:

- Retailer rate compared to government rate
- Retailer comparison rate
- Basic rate compared to government rate

### Lowest possible price

*Show another ad, or go back to a previous one*

It says the 'lowest annual price' is X. What do you think that means?

How do you think that this figure is calculated?

Did you think this figure was tailored to you, or someone like you?

After viewing this ad, if you were to take up this offer what do you think you might pay?

[Explain what the lowest possible price means]

### **Alternative framing**

What would you call something like that?

What sort of terms do you think would help you understand this term?

How would you explain this concept to a friend?

What would you think if it was called:

- Lowest annual price
- Price for an average customer
- Discounted price
- Conditional discount price/ offer
- Representative annual cost

*Thank participants for their time. provide gift voucher and conclude interview.*

## Plain English explanation of key concepts

Below is the text we used to explain the key concept to interview participants. It was conveyed in a semi-structured conversational format at the relevant places in the interview guide.

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*We pay for the electricity we all use in our homes - to run the TV, for the kettle, and to keep the lights on - depending on how much we use. A typical family in Australia might spend \$xxx per month on electricity.*

*In Australia, you can choose to get your energy from different companies. The idea is that these companies compete with each other to offer you the best deal. There are also companies which are better suited to different sorts of people. Some offer better customer service and charge a bit more for it, for example.*

*We want you to be able to understand the different energy offers available to you. But this isn't always easy. The price you pay can depend on lots of different things. To make it easier to understand, the government asks energy companies to all talk about their prices in the same way.*

*First, the government has come up with a starting point price for each region/area. This is called the reference price. This price takes into account that energy can be more expensive in some areas than others, and is set based on the average usage in the relevant area/region. This isn't supposed to be what you will actually pay: it's just so that energy companies are comparing their price to the same thing.*

*Second, energy companies choose how they will compare to this starting point price. They might decide to be cheaper or more expensive. The energy company price is communicated as a comparison to the starting point price (e.g. 20% cheaper). So that you can clearly understand the different energy offers, this percentage figure isn't allowed to include any conditional discounts that the company might be offering.*

*Finally, energy companies can choose to offer conditional offers and discounts to some of their customers. For example, they might offer cheaper prices to people who pay their bills by direct debit. These offers can get complicated, and can make it very hard to compare companies. To make this easier, the government asks energy companies to add up all their different discounts and come up with their lowest possible price. This is not the actual price you can expect to pay, but is based on a typical user's energy consumption.*