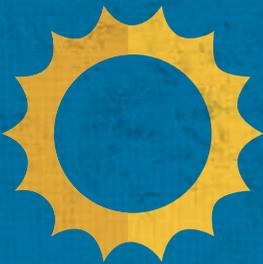




# Sustainable Renters' Guide





## Contents

Renting and the law	4
Your Landlord	4
Rebates	5
Tax Deductions	5
How much energy do you use?	6
Green Power	7
Lighting	7
Kitchen	8
How much do your appliances cost?	11
Easy ways to save	12
Waste and Compost	14
Living Room	16
Bathroom	17
Outside	18
Laundry	19
Bedroom	19
Transport	20
Making apartments more sustainable	21
What Now?	22
Water use guide	23

There are many benefits to living sustainably: a healthier lifestyle, lower utility bills, reduced energy use and lower greenhouse emissions

## Introduction

Welcome to the City of Cockburn! We trust you will enjoy living here. Whether you've already moved into your rental property or are still looking, we've prepared this guide for you to understand the possibilities of adopting a sustainable lifestyle while renting.

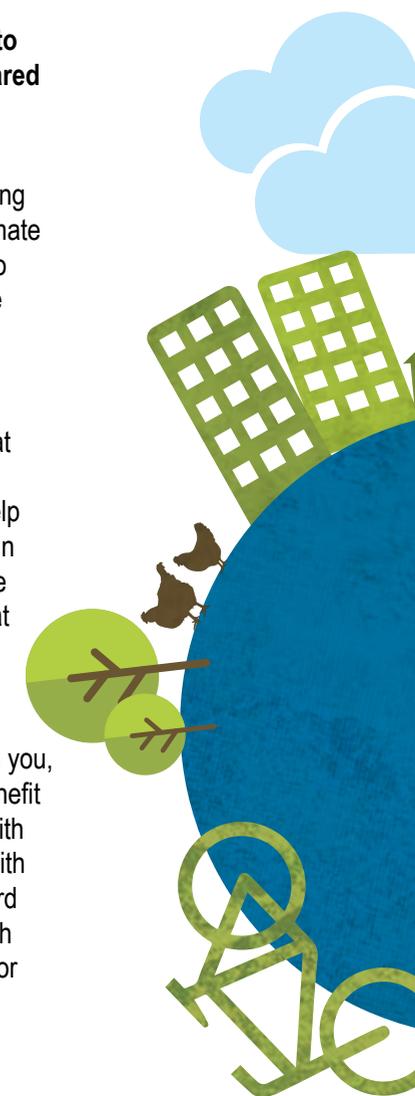
Many Australian households are feeling the strain of rising electricity, gas and water prices. The global issue of climate change and our drying climate, mean that we all need to rethink the way we live. The good news is that there are many changes you can make to help reduce your bills.

### Make a note

Make a note of any changes suggested in this guide that you think are relevant to the house you are in. You can then take them to your landlord and see if they could help you to undertake any of them. Some of the information in this booklet is easily accessed online. If you do not have internet access at home, you can use the free internet at any of the Cockburn libraries by becoming a member.

### Looking for a new home?

When looking for a rental property, take a compass with you, to see if some of the windows face north so you can benefit from winter sunlight and warmth. Try to avoid a home with big windows facing west as you will then have to deal with intense afternoon heat in summer. Ask the agent/landlord whether it has ceiling insulation. Be aware of homes with raked or cathedral ceilings as there will probably be no or poor insulation.



## Renting and the law

As a tenant in a rental property, you have certain rights, but you must be aware of your obligations and responsibilities.

Contact the Tenant Advocate at the Fremantle Community Legal Centre if you need advice, on 9432 9790, or phone the Tenant's Advice Line on 9221 0088.

For more information on your rights as a renter, grab a copy of 'Renting a home in Western Australia: a tenants guide'. A copy of this is available at the City of Cockburn's Financial Counselling Services (see page 22).

## Your Landlord

Home improvements will always require your landlord's permission, unless otherwise covered in your tenant lease agreement.

### There are two common lease types:

*Fixed term lease and periodic lease*

Fixed Term Lease	Periodic Lease
Usually for six or 12 months	No fixed term
Has a definite start and end date	No definitive start and end date
Your landlord will need to give you 30 days notice	21 days notice (tenant) 60 days notice (lessor)

Remember to make any requests and correspondence in writing if possible. If you and your landlord have a disagreement, you will have the proof! Also, bear in mind that any major changes made to the home may make the property more valuable to future renters, and may result in a rent increase for you. But it could be worth it!

## Rebates

The City of Cockburn offers a number of sustainable living incentives and rebates including:

- Free Home Energy and Water Advisory Visits
- Habitat for Homes (birdbath and nesting box subsidies)
- Worm Farm and Compost Subsidy

### For more information visit

[www.cockburn.wa.gov.au/environment](http://www.cockburn.wa.gov.au/environment)

## Tax Deductions

Your landlord may be eligible for tax deductions for improvements to the home that make it more energy efficient and water-wise.

Informing your landlord of tax incentives available for improvements may make them more open to suggestions.

The Australian Tax Office (ATO) produces an annual guide for rental properties, which gives the details on tax deductions available. You can order a free paper copy of this booklet by calling the ATO on 13 28 61. Or read it online at

[www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au)

Living sustainably has never been easier... you can get a rebate for composting or having a worm farm!





## How much energy do you use?

If you are a member of the City of Cockburn's libraries, you can borrow a Home Energy Assessment Toolkit, which will help you to discover ways to make your home more energy efficient and thermally comfortable. This kit includes a hand-held power meter to measure electricity consumption of any appliance.

The Synergy 'My Account' online service not only displays your electricity account but also shows your suburb usage comparison.

## Green power

Around 90% of electricity used in Western Australia is still generated from the burning of fossil fuels, and the electricity sector is the single biggest contributor to Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

Switching to EasyGreen or NaturalPower means that Synergy will buy renewable energy on your behalf. Furthermore, switching to one of these green power products can cut your household carbon footprint by an average of 50%. The extra amount you pay will depend on the percentage of green power you wish to purchase (between 10 and 100%, or a specific dollar amount). Buying 100% green power will add approximately \$5.50 per week to the household bill if you use 15 Units per day.

For more information phone Synergy on **13 13 53** or visit **[www.synergy.net.au](http://www.synergy.net.au)**

You may be entitled to an Energy Rebate if you are a concession card holder.

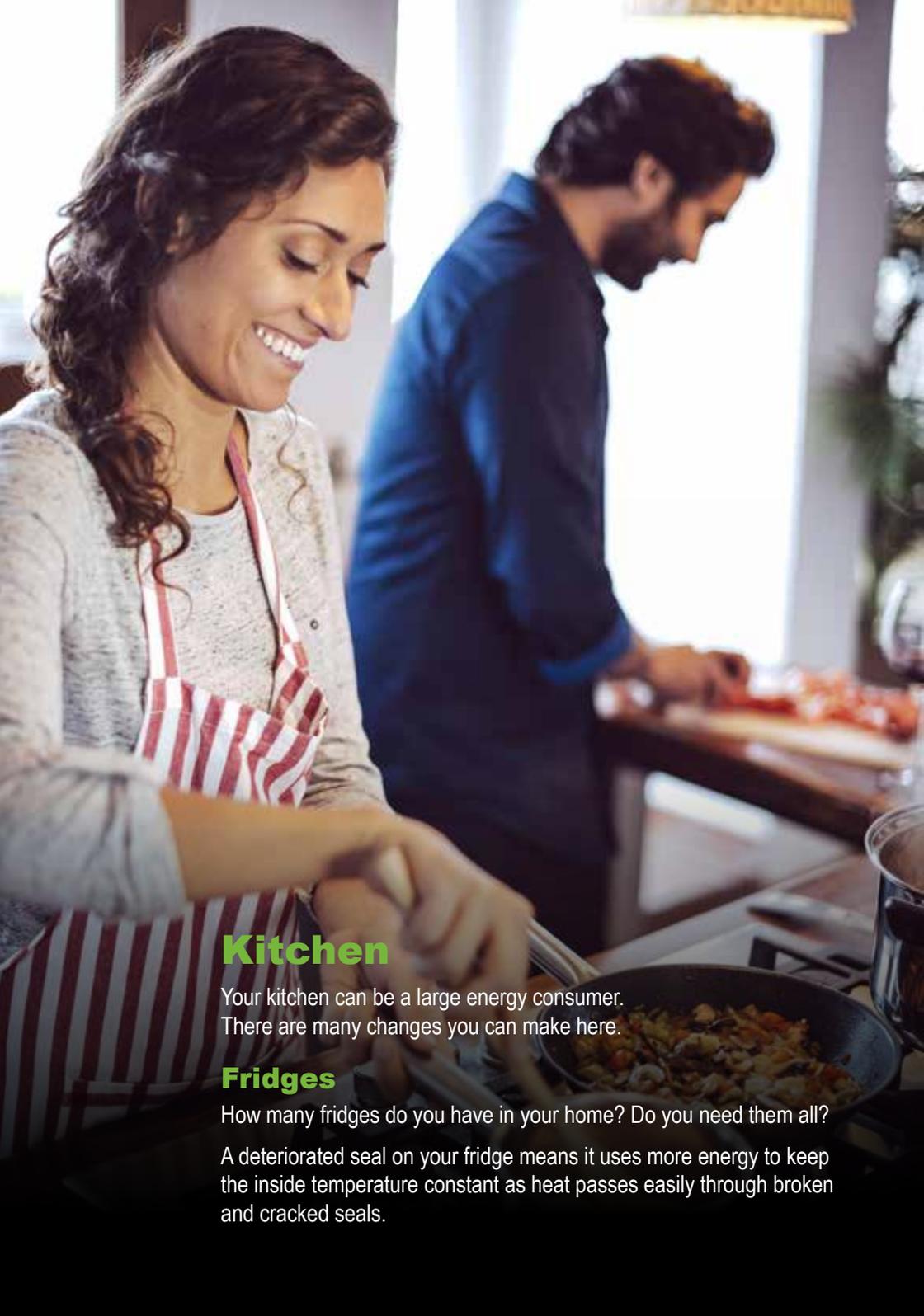
## Lighting

During the day the cheapest way to get light into your home is to open the curtains.

LED Lamps use the least energy to make the most light so although they are more expensive to buy, they will save you money over time.

### Action

- Avoid lighting rooms with lots of halogen downlights. This is especially important in areas such as your living room and kitchen.
- Replace your lighting with Compact Fluorescent Lamps (fluoro globes) or better still, LEDs which have come down in price (now \$10-\$20 each, have a very long life around 10 years and no mercury) This will reduce your household energy consumption and energy bills.



## Kitchen

Your kitchen can be a large energy consumer. There are many changes you can make here.

### Fridges

How many fridges do you have in your home? Do you need them all?

A deteriorated seal on your fridge means it uses more energy to keep the inside temperature constant as heat passes easily through broken and cracked seals.

Gas cookers are cheaper to run than standard electric cookers, reducing your household emissions.

Dusty coils may prevent fridges from effectively regulating temperatures within the appliance. Your fridge will also have to work harder if it's in a warm place, eg outside or in an uninsulated shed.

### Action

Consider replacing fridge door seals if they are cracked, broken or are unable to hold a small piece of paper in the gap when the door is closed.

- Thaw frozen food in the fridge (plan ahead!).
- Does the freezer need de-frosting? If so, do it!
- Check the coils at the back of the fridge for dust and clean them.
- Turn off your second fridge and save up to \$200 per year.
- Set your fridge to run at optimum temperature between 3°C to 5°C.

### Wasting water in the kitchen

Consider fitting flow restrictors or aerators on your taps. Only use your dishwasher when it is full, to save energy and water.

Act ASAP about any dripping taps, inside or outside. One dripping tap can waste 20,000L per year! Depending on what your lease says about whose responsibility this is, either your agent/landlord or you should get a plumber to repair.

If you are buying a washing machine, the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) Scheme can make choosing a water efficient replacement easier. Learn more at: [www.waterrating.gov.au/consumers](http://www.waterrating.gov.au/consumers).

### Action

- Ask your landlord to consider fitting taps with aerators or flow restrictors.
- Make note of leaking taps in your property condition report, and as they occur.

Keep preheating oven times to a minimum in electric ovens. In gas ovens, preheating is not necessary.

## Ovens

Ovens have seals on their doors, which if not operating properly, will allow heat to escape, increasing your utility bills and energy use.

### Action

- Do the 'sheet of paper test' around the door seal of the oven. Turn off the oven. Place a sheet of paper in the door and close it. If you can move the paper easily, let your landlord know that it the oven seal needs to be replaced.

## Cooking

When looking for a home to rent, note what type of stove and oven it has. Gas cookers are cheaper to run than standard electric cookers, reducing your household emissions.

### Action

- Use small appliances where possible.
- Try to use fitted lids on pots when cooking.
- Boil only the amount of water you need.
- Thaw before cooking.
- Keep preheating times to a minimum in electric ovens. In gas ovens, preheating is not necessary.

## How much do your appliances cost to run per hour?



## Tenant energy actions

	<p><b>Install energy saving light globes</b> LED's now \$10-\$20 CFL's (Compact Fluoro Lamps) \$2-\$10 ea</p>	 <p><b>\$150</b></p>	<p><b>SAVE \$150 per year</b> Per year, based on replacing 5 x 100W lights with 13W lamps</p>
	<p><b>Lower your hot water thermostat</b> LED's now \$10-\$20 CFL's (Compact Fluoro Lamps) \$2-\$10 ea</p>	 <p><b>\$150</b></p>	<p><b>SAVE \$150</b> Per year, based on an electric storage unit if you turn it down from 70°C to 60°C</p>
	<p><b>Install a water saving showerhead</b> Approx cost \$20-\$100</p>	 <p><b>\$165</b></p>	<p><b>SAVE \$90 – \$165</b> Water and energy savings per year</p>
	<p><b>Switch off standby power</b> On 5 appliances by turning them off at the wall</p>	 <p><b>\$50</b></p>	<p><b>SAVE \$44 – \$50</b> Per year, depending on appliances</p>
	<p><b>Turn off your second fridge</b></p>	 <p><b>\$200</b></p>	<p><b>SAVE \$200</b> Per year</p>

## Easy ways to Save

### Tips for landlords

	<p><b>Solar hot water system</b> Install a solar hot water system with gas boost *Rebate available</p>	 <p><b>\$620</b></p>	<p><b>SAVE \$430 – \$620</b> Per year compared to gas or electric storage</p>
	<p><b>Solar photovoltaic (PV) System</b> Install a solar Photovoltaic (PV) system *Rebate available</p>	 <p><b>\$600</b></p>	<p><b>SAVE \$600</b> Per year for a 1.5kW system</p>
	<p><b>Roof Insulation</b> Install or upgrade roof insulation</p>	 <p><b>\$80</b></p>	<p><b>SAVE \$90 – \$165</b> Per year depending on hot water system</p>



## Waste and compost

With your help, nearly all household waste in the City of Cockburn can be diverted from landfill! As well as knowing how to dispose of your waste, look for ways to minimise the packaging associated with everyday household items. What items can you reuse?

### Green Topped Bin

The majority of waste going into your green topped bin should be biodegradable meaning it can break down naturally. This includes food scraps, meat and organic fibres. Once this waste is collected it goes to the Regional Resource Recovery Centre where giant heat digesters break it down into compost. General rubbish that can't be recycled (eg nappies) can also go into the green topped bin.

### Yellow Topped Bin

The contents of your yellow topped bin should include paper, all glass, metal and plastics. These items go to a materials recovery facility, where they are separated and recycled for re-manufacture. To learn how to correctly dispose of your household waste, visit

[www.recycleright.net.au](http://www.recycleright.net.au)

Take a reusable shopping bag with you when you shop and keep some in your car for bigger trips.

### Wormfarming and Composting

Consider starting home composting or wormfarming. Wormfarming will suit your circumstances if you don't have a long lease and may have to move fairly soon – as you can carry your working wormfarm by car to your next home.

The City of Cockburn has very generous rebates for compost bins, wormfarms and bokashi buckets and runs free workshops every couple of months.

For more information and handy tips visit:

[www.cockburn.wa.gov.au/waste](http://www.cockburn.wa.gov.au/waste)

[www.earthcarers.org.au](http://www.earthcarers.org.au)

[www.recycleright.wa.gov.au](http://www.recycleright.wa.gov.au)

[www.plasticfreejuly.org/living-plastic-free](http://www.plasticfreejuly.org/living-plastic-free)

### Action

- Take a reusable shopping bag with you when you shop. Keep some in your car for bigger trips.
- Use containers for food instead of cling film (or use clear shower cap!).
- Buy in bulk, when practical, to minimise packaging.
- Get your free copy of the City of Cockburn's household waste disposal information.
- Find out what happens to your waste: the Southern Metropolitan Regional Council offers free tours of its Regional Resource Recovery Centre. Book a tour on (08) 9256 9555.
- Check out the City of Cockburn's compost bin, wormfarm and bokashi bin subsidy scheme.

## Living room

### Appliances

Switching your appliances off at the wall or on a more convenient individually switched powerboard when not in use will reduce your household energy bill.

### Thermal Comfort

The living room is a room of relaxation, so it should be thermally comfortable. Look for ways to naturally cool and heat this room. Have a throw rug ready for those cold nights!

#### Action for cold months

- Seal draughts! Consider buying or making a door snake, which is a cheap and easy way to seal draughts.
- If you don't have pelmets for curtains or blinds, ask your landlord!
- Heat only the room you are using.
- Let the sunshine in from the northern side of your home, taking care to close curtains/blinds when the afternoon cools down.

#### Action for hot months

- Shade your windows from the summer sun.
- Open the windows to let out the heat at the end of hot days.
- If you don't have security or flyscreens on your windows, ask your landlord if they can install them. Combined security/flyscreens on some doors and windows are a fantastic investment!

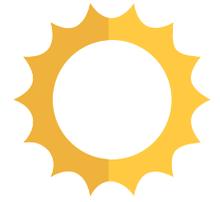
If you are a senior, or pensioner, Cockburn offers a rebate for fitting of security devices, even if you are renting.

## Bathroom

Check taps and take note if they are leaking or need to be upgraded to more efficient options. Consider a shower timer and make the effort to limit your shower time to four minutes.

#### Action

- Use the dual flush function of your toilet. If you don't have the dual flush function, ask the landlord to install one.
- Check your showerhead. Does it use 9L minute or less? (Hold a standard 9 or 10L bucket under the shower and run for 30 seconds – estimate how many Litres you've collected and multiply by 2, for Litres per Minute). Ask your landlord if they can install a water efficient showerhead.
- Make note of any leaking pipes, taps and toilets in your property condition report.
- Try to find a place with gas boosted (solar) hot water. Your energy use and bills will be much less than with a standard electric system. But if you have solar hot water, manage the booster carefully or you'll be paying for a lot of electricity or gas to run it. Turn the booster off for all warm months and, in winter, at times of the day when you don't need hot water, if practical in your household. It only needs approximately 40 minutes to warm your water.
- While your shower is warming up, collect the cool water in a bucket and use on the garden.
- Set your thermostat to a maximum of 60°C (storage hot water) and 42°C (instantaneous systems).





## Outside

Tenants are usually required to maintain the garden. Be aware of water thirsty gardens, i.e with lots of lawn. The City of Cockburn produces 'Grow Local' brochures on appropriate native plant species for soil type.

### Action

- Talk to your landlord about reducing lawn and replacing with native vegetation or fruit trees.
- Ask your landlord if you can plant a veggie patch, and remember to mulch, you'll save a lot of water.
- Download a Grow Local brochure  
[www.cockburn.wa.gov.au/environment](http://www.cockburn.wa.gov.au/environment)

Ask your landlord if you can plant a veggie patch, and remember to mulch, you'll save a lot of water.

## Laundry

If your washing machine needs replacing, replace it with a higher star rating machine – it will save you money.

### Action

- Biodegradable and phosphate free detergents are a safer option for the environment and your health.
- Wash only on full loads.
- Wash in cold water.
- Hand washing? Use a plug!

## Bedroom

Thermal comfort and light levels are important considerations for your bedroom.

### Action

- If your bedroom windows don't have security screens, ask your landlord to consider installing them so you can allow the seabreeze into your home in summer.
- In winter, use extra doonas or blankets before an electric blanket. Get your kids into sleeping bags in the coldest weather instead of putting heaters in their rooms. Electric blankets are much cheaper to run than heaters running overnight.
- Use solar passive principles when choosing a bedroom. Rooms on the southern side of the home let the least amount of light in. Rooms with east-facing windows will mean very early light in summer, while west-facing windows will warm your bedroom on summer afternoons.
- Check door and window seals.





## Transport

**Public transport, bicycles and your own feet are a great alternative to private vehicle use. Transperth's online Journey Planner is a handy tool for planning your journey using public transport or walking.**

There are many trips you could make using alternative methods of transport.

If you're new to the area, joining your local walking group can be a fun way to get to know your neighbourhood. You may be surprised at how close you live to different facilities.

The City of Cockburn has many great walking groups. Find them at [www.cockburn.wa.gov.au/Community\\_Services/Recreation\\_Services/Cockburn\\_Walking\\_Groups](http://www.cockburn.wa.gov.au/Community_Services/Recreation_Services/Cockburn_Walking_Groups) or phone 9411 3444.

### Action

- Is your home close to where you spend a lot of time (work, friends, uni, family, local shops)?
- Investigate your nearest public transport stops.
- Find out where your local public transport service goes to and comes from, and what other routes it connects to.
- Use the Transperth Journey Planner:  
[www.transperth.wa.gov.au](http://www.transperth.wa.gov.au) or phone 13 62 13.

## Making apartments more sustainable

**Many of the suggestions throughout this guide can be applied to apartments. A few specific suggestions are outlined below, and will require permission from your landlord.**

Your landlord may be unaware of them, and may appreciate your suggestions.

### Action

- Replace external lighting with energy efficient bulbs.
- Check that the lighting in stairwells isn't on longer than it needs to be, or during daylight hours. If you notice that it is, tell your landlord.
- Central heating and cooling systems need to be well shaded and well ventilated. If not, tell your landlord.
- If you have a communal laundry area, put up signs encouraging other residents to wash in cold water.
- If you don't have a clothesline in the complex ask for one to reduce your need to rely on electrical dryers, or get a small clothes airer, ideally one with little wheels to move it easily from indoors to outside and back again.
- Talk to your neighbours about changes you're making – it's a great way to share ideas and network.

## What now?

Throughout the year, the City of Cockburn hosts events and workshops and publishes information on sustainability.

The best ways to keep up to date is through facebook:

- [www.facebook.com/CityOfCockburn](http://www.facebook.com/CityOfCockburn)

Or you can subscribe to our online newsletter here:

- [www.cockburn.wa.gov.au](http://www.cockburn.wa.gov.au)

Sustainability events and information are available at:

- [www.cockburn.wa.gov.au/environment](http://www.cockburn.wa.gov.au/environment)

Online, there are tools and checklist that can help you to save energy and water:

- Energy Tips [www.synergy.net.au/at\\_home/energy\\_saving\\_tips.xhtml](http://www.synergy.net.au/at_home/energy_saving_tips.xhtml)
- Energy Checklist [www.synergy.net.au/docs/Energy\\_Efficiency\\_Checklist.pdf](http://www.synergy.net.au/docs/Energy_Efficiency_Checklist.pdf)
- Water Tips [www.watercorporation.com.au/save-water/water-saving-tips](http://www.watercorporation.com.au/save-water/water-saving-tips)

## Book a free home audit

Visits generally take about 90 minutes. You will receive tailored advice to help reduce your electricity, gas and water bills. An experienced advisor will check that your reticulation, hot water, fridge and pool/spa are working efficiently, check standby loads, and can suggest ways to improve heating and cooling.

## Financial Counselling

The City of Cockburn also offers Financial Counselling Services, to help people gain economic independence. These services include disseminating information, hosting workshops, referrals, assistance with money management skills and understanding policies and laws. They are located in Coolbellup and Success.

### Coolbellup Financial Counselling Services

Coolbellup Community Hub | 90 Cordelia Ave Coolbellup 6163  
T: 9411 3850, 9am – 3pm | Monday to Friday (by appointment)

### Success Financial Counselling Services

Cockburn Integrated Health Facility  
1st Floor Suite 14/11 Wentworth Pde Success 6164  
T: 9411 3858, 9am – 4pm | Monday to Friday (by appointment)

## What uses the most water?

You might be surprised to see how much water these items use in a year.



## **Acknowledgements**

The City of Cockburn would like to acknowledge Environment Victoria and the Tenants' Union of Victoria for their leadership and support of the information presented in this brochure.

## **City of Cockburn**

9 Coleville Crescent

Spearwood

T: 9411 3444 Fax: 9311 4444

E: [customer@cockburn.wa.gov.au](mailto:customer@cockburn.wa.gov.au)

[www.cockburn.wa.gov.au/environment](http://www.cockburn.wa.gov.au/environment)

This document is available in alternative formats on request.

If you have finished reading this booklet, please consider the environment and pass this copy onto a friend.



Printed on 100% recycled paper