

# Between a Rock and a Hard Place

## Carers' Electricity Costs Follow-up Survey Report

November 2003

- ❖ Energy costs are a significant burden for family Carers who provide care in the home for family members with chronic illness, disabilities or who are frail aged.
- ❖ Over the last twelve months Carers have experienced electricity price increases of 32% (\$80.96/quarter).
- ❖ 70% of respondents relied on government payments for their main income, with 46% on annual household incomes of less than \$20,000 and 81% on household incomes of less than \$30,000.
- ❖ Following the increases Carers on a single Carer Payment were paying 11.5% of that benefit on electricity. By comparison the average electricity bill for Carers represents only 3% of the Male Total Average Weekly Earnings.
- ❖ Carers felt shocked, angry and overwhelmed at the price rises. They were worried about how they could pay their bills. They felt betrayed and robbed.
- ❖ Because the need for power, particularly for heating, cooling and life maintaining equipment, was a priority for the health and well being of the care recipient, and money was limited, Carers cut back on other life essentials.
- ❖ Whilst 73% reported changing the way they use electricity only 47% reported that it had made a difference to their bills.
- ❖ 41% said that they had trouble paying their bill, a 5% increase over the twelve months. 15% sought external help, double that of the previous study.
- ❖ Carers felt devalued by suppliers and the government and called for greater assistance through increases in the rates and eligibility for concessions and discounts to provide financial relief.

**The Carers Association believes that it is crucial for the Government and energy suppliers to continue to explore ways to provide appropriate financial and other support for family Carers least able to afford increased energy costs but for whom electricity is an essential commodity.**



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# Introduction

## Electricity Costs Questionnaires

Energy costs are a significant burden for Carers who rely on year round comfort for those they care for. Carers, already concerned at general price increases, viewed with alarm an expected 25% electricity price rise at the beginning of 2003 when South Australia would join the nation-wide trend in deregulating the way households purchased electricity (Full Retail Contestability).

In late 2002, in response to these concerns the Carers Association sought the views of Carers through an Electricity Costs Questionnaire. Carers were asked about their use of electricity or gas; the potential impact of electricity price rises; their use of, and attitude to, financial assistance; ways they would tackle increasing prices and their opinions on what the government could do to help them. A survey report, *Too Old and Too Slow to be a Burglar*, was published and widely distributed.

During 2003 the Carers Association has continued to be part of discussions with government, suppliers and other non government agencies about the impact of rising electricity prices and actions such as concessions that might alleviate any distress being felt.

In response to continuing Carer concerns the Association once again sought the views of Carers through an Electricity Costs Follow up Survey. Approximately 1,150 questionnaires were inserted into the September 2003 edition of the Association's quarterly newsletter SA Carer. 81 questionnaires were returned, a response of 7%. Carers were asked about:

- Special caring needs that affect the use of electricity.
- The amount of their last quarterly electricity account compared with the amount for the same quarter of 2002.
- Their reaction to, and action about, the price rises.
- Changes to the way they used electricity following the increases and whether this made a difference to the total bill.
- Problems experienced paying the bills and assistance sought.
- Whether the information provided about the price rises and individual accounts was adequate.

## Carers Struggle to Meet Electricity Costs

The 2003 Questionnaire which confirmed the results of the 2002 survey indicated that price increases have had considerable negative impact on Carers and that Carers need greater government intervention in the form of direct financial and other supports, particularly concessions.

Although public reports indicate an electricity price rise of 27% over the last year, our research indicated that South Australian Carers had experienced a 32% increase in their average electricity bill. This has left Carers feeling shocked, angry and overwhelmed. They were worried about how they could pay their bills, and felt betrayed and robbed by the price hike.

There were significant levels of resignation, that is, Carers felt that they had no choice but to pay. However, because the need for power, particularly for heating, cooling and life maintaining equipment, was a priority and money was limited, respondents indicated that they cut back on other life essentials. This confirmed the previous study that indicated that Carers continued to put the health and well being of themselves and the person they care for at risk by using less heating and cooling.

Cutting back on the use of oxygen equipment, showering less, wearing two lots of clothes, wrapping up in blankets and staying in bed longer were just some of the measures that they had had to take for example during the winter months. Many also reported using power more effectively by turning lights off and changing to energy efficient globes or making other appliance changes, often at considerable initial cost.

73% reported changing their electricity use. However only 47% reported that this had made a difference and of those 26% indicated that nevertheless the bill had increased.

41% said that they had trouble paying their bill, a 5% increase over the twelve months. 15% sought external help, double that of the previous study. Assistance was sought through friends, Centrelink or welfare agencies or by seeking extensions to pay the supplier.

Respondents observed that they had used less but paid more; that care recipients required even temperatures for their health and well being; that increased levels of stress, worry, anxiety and fear of failing the care recipient accompanied the price increases; that it was becoming increasingly difficult to manage their budgets; that they felt devalued and called for greater government assistance through increases in the rates and eligibility for concessions and discounts to provide financial relief.

## **Income and Costs**

Government Payments or Pensions provided 70% of respondents with their major source of income. A total of 46% had an annual household income of less than \$20,000 per year, with a total of 81% on household incomes less than \$30,000. 37% lived in rural areas of the state.

It was reported in the previous survey that the average annual electricity bill for Carers was 14.5% more than that of the average South Australian. Furthermore, that it took up a significant proportion of Carers' household expenditure. An annual bill based on respondents' latest quarterly bill would be \$1320. This represents 11.5% of the Carer Payment for single people and 7% of the Carer Payment for couples, as compared to 3% of the Male Total Average Weekly Earnings. 11.5% of the MTAWWE would be the equivalent of an annual bill of \$5,068, whilst 7% would be \$3,084!

## **Recommendations**

**The Carers Association believes that it is crucial for Governments and energy suppliers to continue to explore ways to provide appropriate financial and other support for family Carers least able to afford increased energy costs but for whom electricity is an essential commodity. Such measures would include:**

- **Recognition of the additional burden on family Carers of the energy costs in meeting the needs of the care recipients.**
- **Strategies for the equitable inclusion of family Carers who need assistance with household expenses such as electricity and gas.**
- **Increasing the income threshold for energy concessions.**
- **Recognition of the Carers Allowance as a basis for eligibility for concessions and subsidies for household costs.**
- **Development of strategic programs of education on entitlements to concessions and subsidies.**
- **Increasing the Carers Payment and doubling the Carers Allowance.**

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## Special caring needs

Special caring needs that affect the use of electricity eg cooling, heating, equipment.

Please describe.

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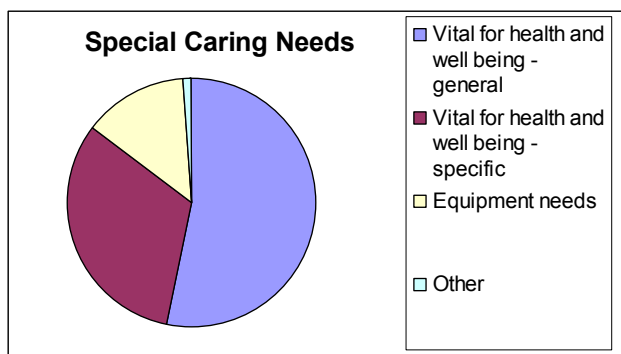
### Vital for Health and Well Being

Not only are heating and cooling required for general comfort but for most respondents they are essential to maintain the health and well being of the person being cared for, since most feel the heat or cold more than would be normally expected. Inactivity as a result of their particular condition exacerbates this. Conditions reported included paraplegia, emphysema, COAD, chronic pain, autism, asthma, depression, muscular dystrophy, MS, cardiomyopathy, neurological conditions, osteoarthritis and cerebro-muscular insufficiency.

Hot water for washing clothes and bed linen is also considered essential for those caring for people with incontinence. This washing can take place several times a day, or constantly.

Aside from heating and cooling appliances other equipment being used for the health of the care recipient included air purifiers, spas for muscle soreness, steam vaporisers, nebulisers, oxygen concentrators, electric armchairs, wheelchairs, special smoke alarms, air mattress pumps and C Pap machines.

Reading lamps, televisions and lights were also in constant use.



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## Amount of Electricity Bills

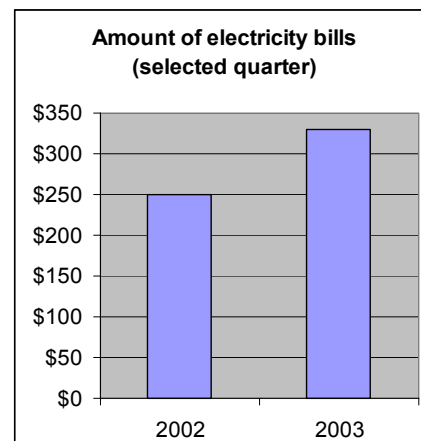
What was the amount of your last quarterly electricity account?

What was the amount for the same quarter last year (2002)?

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Respondents were asked to compare their last quarterly account with the same one from 2002. The average account had risen from \$249.81 for the quarter (62 respondents were able to cite the amount) to \$330.14 (77 respondents). This \$80.96 (\$243.84 per year) difference represents an average increase of 32%.

The average increase of those respondents (62) able to directly compare quarterly bills was \$88.30 or 35% (\$249.81 to \$338.11).



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## How Have Price Rises Affected You?

How did you feel?

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### Raw Emotion

Shock, surprise, disgust, terror, devastation, lack of control, betrayal, disappointment, anger, outrage, frustration, disbelief, stress and depression and feeling robbed and unloved were the emotions felt by respondents on receiving accounts following the price rises:

"Dramatically: I felt sick."

"I felt disgusted, worried and very angry and asked myself, "What next?". Being diabetic myself I can do without the extra stress."

"I was totally overwhelmed. I expected an increase because of price rises but not \$200 more."

"Outraged at the steep increases and astonished that the Government permitted such increases to stand. It is disturbing that the Opposition had little to say on these increases."

"Very disappointed and annoyed that the Government and power companies can't produce the power at a more reasonable cost. The basics of life are costing the price of 'luxuries' and getting beyond the control of many families, especially those like ourselves on restricted incomes because of early retirement due to illness."

"Unprintable."

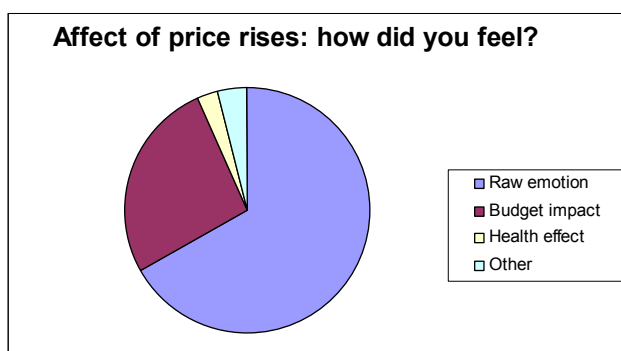
### Budget Impact

According to respondents budgeting had become even more difficult and burdensome. Tightening the belt, living always to credit, cutting back on other things and becoming even poorer were the comments. Respondents were cutting back on energy use but the bills still increased. Prices were increasing endlessly and more than cost of living adjustments. There was a call for an increase in government concessions. As respondents stated,

"I am unsure how I am going to pay for the account; the rise was a big rise."

"Though not unexpected it made a hole in my budget that took some recalculating to get right."

One respondent stated that they were coping, whilst another stated that they hadn't noticed because they pre-pay but were nevertheless annoyed by "the price rises and the governments who did this".



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## What did you do?

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### Just paid

There was a significant level of resignation in that 38% of respondents indicated that they had no choice but to just "accept the situation" and pay up, including a number that sought extensions, payment by instalments or increased their prepayment levels.

"Well, what can you do, apart from pay it?"

"Paid it. What choice do I have: send him to an institution?"

"What can you do? Complaining to the companies gets you nowhere. The government should be helping."

### Affect on Energy Consumption

Strategies for reducing consumption of electricity included wrapping up in a 'warm rug', replacing curtains with heavier material, cutting heater use (then feeling the cold), fitting a gas cooker and instant gas hot water service, staying in bed and/or going to bed early, cutting entertainment 'to the bone', only switching heating on late in the afternoon, changing to fluorescent globes and keeping to one room with doors closed and blinds and shutters down.

"One shower a week; wash the dishes once a day; only use one element to cook on rotating pots and pans. Wear two lots of clothes; also use blankets wrapped around us."

"With food prices rising and cost of electricity being much dearer we have to sit in the cold during the day."

### Other Cut Backs

Other respondents reported readjusting the budget, cutting back "as much as possible", shopping "even more carefully" and cutting down in other areas such as entertainment, new clothes and general spending, but one suggested they were "eating less but paying more".

Several had made enquiries about concessions, agency assistance or "filled out the appropriate forms with Centrelink".

Five respondents felt either that they could not reduce consumption any further or that there was nothing they could do; for example:

"I did nothing, just got on with my life and caring then hoped for more understanding from those in position to make things better."

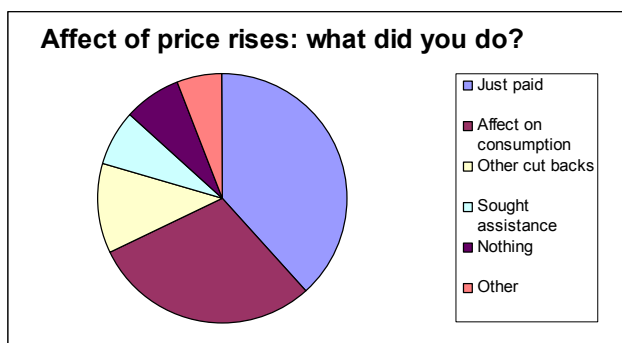
### Other Comments

One respondent discussed the price increases with other Carers who also found difficulty in paying accounts but did not want to admit the difficulties to their families.

Whilst another suggested that people "pray the situation doesn't get any worse".

One changed supplier having obtained energy contract offers whilst another put the question:

"What can you do except cast your vote every 4 years."



### Have you changed your use of electricity this year (2003)?

#### If yes, in what way?

73% indicated a change in use habits by using less, turning things off, and installing energy efficient or replacing inefficient appliances.

#### Used Less

Beyond those who "already use the minimum", "try to be efficient", "each year look for ways to reduce costs" or who monitored unnecessary usage, strategies for "using less where possible and practical" included:

- Sold waterbed.
- Heating never used; go to bed very early to keep warm. This has meant, (as I have had spinal surgery that has left me in pain if I sit, lie or walk for too long), the level of pain has increased. The summer will be the same, but I will use the cooling only for my son.
- Used heater less in winter and rugged up more.

- Lowering the heat level on thermometer so it cuts out more often.
- Sitting in the semi-dark, using blankets and lower heating to keep warm.
- We both stayed in bed until noon; my wife used hot water bottles instead of the electric blanket, and I provided a small bar heater for my wife. I did not use a heater myself. We ate a lot of sandwiches and salads rather than use the stove.
- Shut up the house early, open up later. Keep the doors shut inside and use blinds and shutters in extreme weather.
- Cooked several meals whilst baking, freezing them and just reheating.
- Put on air conditioner to warm house then turn it off. Husband is staying off oxygen machine whenever possible - can't stay off too long.
- Using no heating during day until late in afternoon.
- Used oven cooking less.
- Only have heating/cooling in Mum's room.
- Only put the heater on at night.
- Turned off all radios with clocks and remote on TV; listen to radio with batteries.
- We have solar hot water. We use low energy light bulbs! Only heat or cool used areas, not whole house.
- Cut down on usage by being miserly.
- Have tried to turn lights off when not needed, wash clothes only when there is a full load. Don't use dryer, turn air conditioner off for short periods but can't for long, husband has to be kept warm.
- I do all my cooking on the (bottled gas) barbecue.
- When practicable we use wheat bags at our backs to keep warm instead of the air conditioner and also in our bed at night. Wash clothes in cold water now.
- Use only fans in summer, close doors, draw curtains and blinds late afternoon to keep out cold.

#### Turned Things Off

A dozen respondents indicated that they "don't leave anything on when there's no need!", including lights, the hot water booster ("on

sunny days”), the second fridge, the heater when the person with a disability was on outings, not using the clothes dryer, turning off electric mattresses during the day. There was also constant monitoring of all ‘constant use appliances’.

### Installed Energy Efficient Appliances

23% of respondents sought efficiencies through changing light bulbs to fluorescent, long life or lower wattage ones, and through changes to appliances such as:

- Installed small convection oven instead of using large one and microwave.
- Using new washing machine.
- Started using the fry pan and microwave more.
- Fitting of air conditioners for health reasons.
- We had low voltage down lights installed above each of our chairs in the den where we spend most of our time.
- We replaced our 2 door refrigerator with a smaller one.
- Have used more firewood for our combustion heater.
- We (ie our daughter) have added a gas heater.
- Used a small thermostat controlled fan heater instead of reverse cycle air conditioner.
- Use of camp gas cooker.

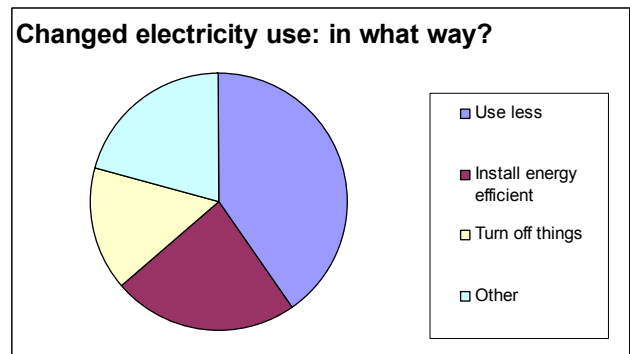
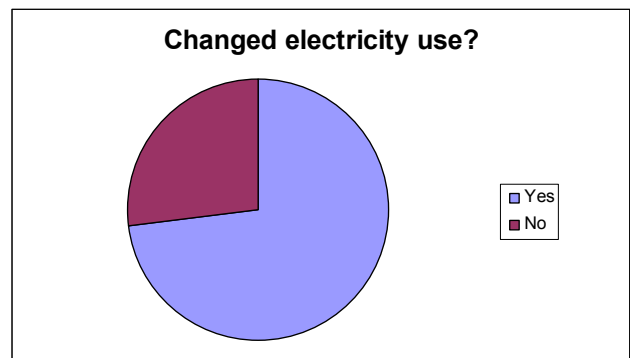
Respondents referred to a number of these changes as involving some initial cost; for example spending “almost \$600 putting fluoro lamps in”.

### Other Comments

Other respondents who were already “very careful of our use of electricity”, “aware of cost”, or for whom consumption was “very constant” nevertheless referred to:

- May be using more because of my husband always being cold and myself too hot.
- Slightly more use of clothes dryer due to more rain and need to be sure of clothes not being damp.
- Forced to run heater during meal times and showers knowing we can ill afford it.

- Because of wetter/colder winter extra heating and use of dryer has been necessary.
- Needed to keep cool because of heatwaves.
- More heating and an electric bed.
- Have had to use additional heating - colder this year.
- Reduced non medical use.
- All that is used in our house is considered necessary to sustain a reasonable living standard.



## Has changing to way you use electricity made a difference to the total bill?

### What difference has it made?

Whilst 73% had changed their use of electricity only 47% of respondents indicated that this had made a difference to their bill:

- Cost went down.
- Has kept the price down to the amount I can afford (at the moment).
- Daily use dropped from 8 units/day to 7.6.
- Cut down the amount by about 1%.
- Paid the same amount as last year.
- Stopped it from rising higher.

- Little bit less \$20-\$25.
- Extremely careful with use - just go without.
- Increased costs of all utilities are an ongoing nightmare. Our home is an intensive care site 24hrs a day 7 days a week.
- (I try not to use it) I use the barbecue for cooking.
- A little, not much, but some.
- We can't use the wood fire now so have to rely on electricity.
- I think I saved about \$12 on my bill.

However, even though they had made changes to their use, just over a quarter of these people (26%) indicated that nevertheless the bill had increased with reference to the higher costs; for example:

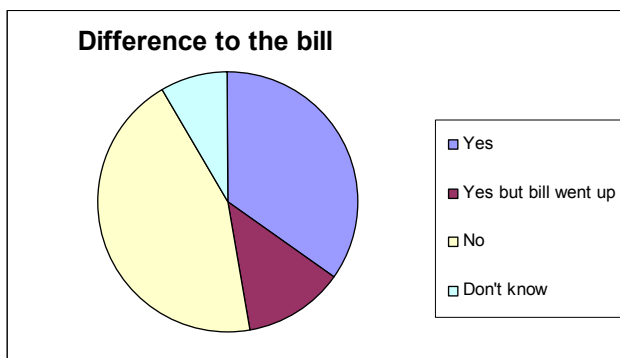
"Slightly less units used but price has actually increased."

"Keeps going up. We have turned off spa, water bed and freezer and still have a 30% increase in account for same period in 2000. These were purchased to assist in the rehabilitation of spinal injuries."

44% indicated that there had been no or little difference as a result of changing usage, with bills still increasing and comfort being reduced.

"Perhaps changing the way we use electricity has reduced the cost, yet with price increases, our bill is higher than ever. Finding the extra money is no easy task!"

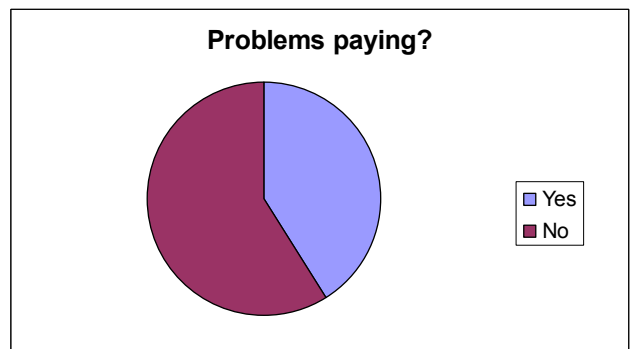
8% were either unable to make a judgement at this stage, a member of the household had been absent or their bill varied (from "high to very high").



## Have you experienced problems paying your bills since the price rises?

41% indicated that they had had troubles paying their account, an increase of 5%, or 1 in 20, from the previous survey.

59%, then, had not experienced problems with payment but comments such as "cutting down somewhere else to balance the budget", "we have managed so far", "not yet – next time possibly" indicated that this might change.



## Did you seek assistance in paying these bills? Where?

15% had sought assistance in paying their accounts, doubling the 7% of the 2002 survey. Assistance was sought from friends, government concessions, instalment payments, and government and non government agencies.

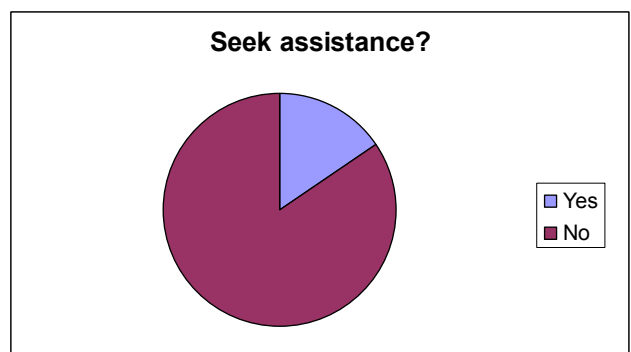
83% had not sought assistance. Several respondents mentioned pre payment, whilst other comments included:

"How? Where?"

"No! The bills must be paid no matter what!"

"I find it difficult to ask for help so I just struggle to get things paid the best I can."

"I believe all aged pensioners experience difficulty paying accounts."



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## Information

**Did you receive adequate information about the price rises from the electricity retailer?**

**Did your account contain adequate explanation about the total of the bill?**

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66% of respondents reported receiving adequate information on prices although one suggested that this was from the media.

76% of respondents reported receiving adequate information about their quarterly bill.

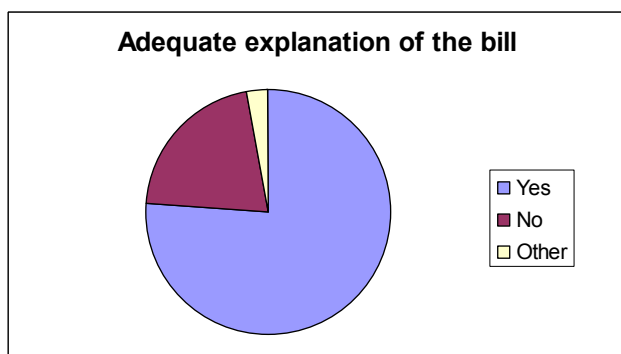
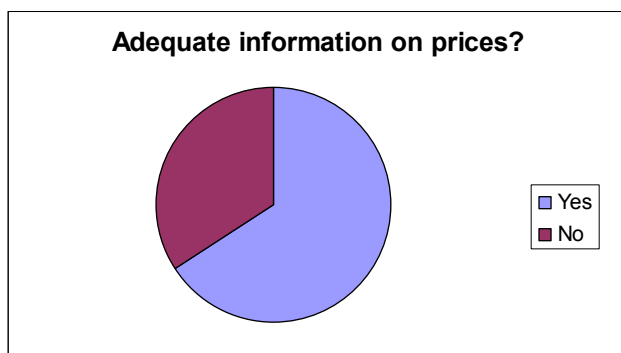
"Reasonably, but I cannot understand the increase in domestic light/power and neither could they."

"Yes, quite plainly, it stated electricity will cost more."

"AGL seem to have stopped putting comparisons for the same periods."

Several respondents did not venture an opinion either way, with one stating:

"I still don't know why it had to rise so much."



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## Any Other Comments

### Price of Power

Respondents observed that they had used less but paid more; that power was meant to be cheaper following privatisation; that the price increase was "bloody disgusting"; that there had been "no attempt to justify such large increases or to explain the cost increases or the cost pressures that were presumed to be the cause of such increases"; that even though they had been absent for almost half the quarter the bill was still high; that they had received details of rises after the event, "as usual" and that bill's detail did not allow comparison with the same period of the previous year.

"It is not only electricity costs that are escalating. Increasing council rates, water and food costs, health benefits and medical fees compound the problem. Living in the country fuel costs are high and this pushes the cost of goods up due to freight cost."

"I cannot understand the 'logic' of pricing. It does not cost us a differential price for water or gas or bread or milk depending on the season. Why is electricity dearer in February than April?"

### Need for Power

The need for an even temperature for care recipients continued as a theme in this section. Respondents were caring for the frail aged, or family and friends relying on 24 hour a day oxygen or having disabilities, severe respiratory problems, heart conditions or being an insulin dependent diabetic who needed an even temperature to keep comfortable and stable.

"We just have to be warm when we are cold and cool when we are hot. To have basic needs met, decent hot food and entertainment and live better than animals."

"The frail aged need their environment to be at an even temperature to maintain their energy so they can continue to enjoy their twilight years."

Use of low settings reduced costs, but the care recipient suffered "in proportion to the increased cold".

Constant supply was another concern.

"As my husband has to rely on 24 hour a day oxygen it is very difficult. I have a fear

of power failure, especially at night. Although there is portable oxygen here it lasts only 3-4 hours."

### **Affect on Carer**

Increased levels of stress, worry, fear, anxiety and concern over failing the care recipient have accompanied the price increases.

"Worrying about the power bills, not having the resources to pay extra costs without cutting back on even more basics is not pleasant. Carers have a hard enough life without forgoing warmth in winter and cooling in summer. It has affected my physical wellbeing and will continue to make my caring role more painful."

"I fear the approach of summer as I have to run the air conditioner. I cannot think of a more economical way. I am very anxious and feel I am letting my wife suffer more than necessary. I am failing her."

"I think it is time the Government realised we don't get the same pay packet they get and many people suffer stress because of it."

"They have you over a barrel."

### **Government Assistance**

Respondents called for an increase in the rate of, and eligibility for, concessions or discounts to provide some financial relief, noting that concessions and pensions had not increased in line with the cost of living and that the GST was an additional burden. One suggestion was to remove the GST on essential services. One respondent expressed their gratitude for the rebate given for the power used to run an oxygen concentrator.

"If the Government does not offer more financial assistance, then I fear my wife will have to go into a nursing home and she is only 52 years old. I can't cope with the added stress of trying to pay for an essential service."

### **Income/Budgeting**

Price increases were making life very difficult for Carers trying to balance their budgets, according to respondents. Lower interest rates reducing income from investments, constantly rising costs of goods and services, the increases in essential services with the GST and levy components,

attempts to save to provide for the care recipient "when we are gone", being "asset rich but income poor" were all mentioned as putting strain on budgeting attempts.

One respondent called for assistance with saving. Other comments included:

"Our daughter's disability pension is not enough due to all the extra expenses for continence aids such as disposables for which we spend approximately \$120 every 3 weeks besides other costs for powder, wet ones, gloves, pads etc."

"It would be a lot harder if there were not two incomes."

"We cannot afford heating, using approximately 20% of income on electricity even with minimal use."

"I am active and can still earn the extra dollar if needed, but housebound Carers with limited skills must be really scratching."

"The difficulty in controlling expenditure is leading us to the point of thinking about selling our family home and moving into rental."

"It's getting harder to live and it's getting harder to be a Carer."

"I also pay \$10 a week using the AGL card whenever possible. It helps with the cost when the bill arrives, but it means I have \$10 less each week for other things. We go without some weeks depending on other bills at the time."

### **Recognition**

"To AGL and particularly the Government, it is hard not to feel more devalued in our important role as Carers. How much do we save the Government and how little do we get in return?"

### **Other Comments**

Respondents talked about "bureaucratic bungling and duck shoving", considerations of changing supplier, moving to a smaller home in a less convenient location, not being as badly off as others, governments "hopefully" learning a lesson regarding privatisation, questions of "Where will it stop?" and worries for Carers with health problems.

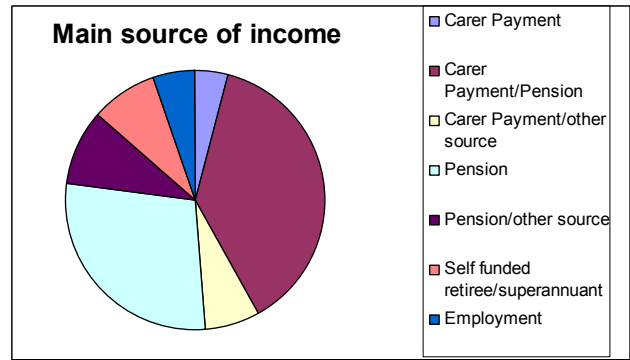
"It seems hardly worthwhile battling giant corporations plus this Government but I

hope the Carers Association can alleviate the weight on our shoulders.”

“Help!!”

“I don’t like to complain too much as we are very grateful we don’t often have blackouts of power and that it is part of having a mother who costs more in some ways but saves us in others financially.”

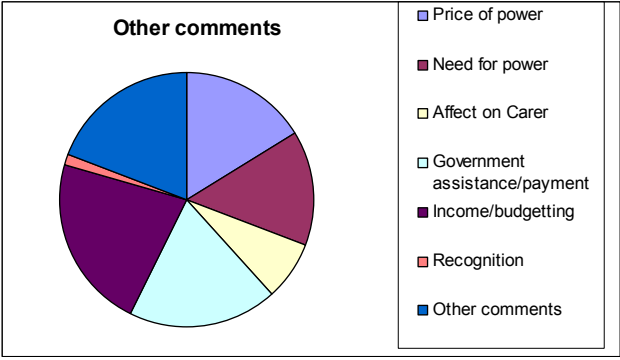
“Promises made in the past of reduced rates have not been realised. As a Carer some areas cannot be cut or reduced otherwise quality and quantity of care for caree would suffer.”



**Total household income per year (i.e. total all residents)**

- Less than \$10,000 (*\$193/week*)
- \$10,000 - \$19,999 (*\$194 - \$384/week*)
- \$20,000 - \$29,999 (*\$385 - \$574/week*)
- \$30,000 - \$39,999 (*\$575 - \$769/week*)
- \$40,000 - \$49,999 (*\$770 - \$959/week*)
- \$50,000 or more (*\$960/week*)

46% reported an annual household income of less than \$20,000; 81% one of less than \$30,000, whilst only 18% reported one of more than \$30,000.

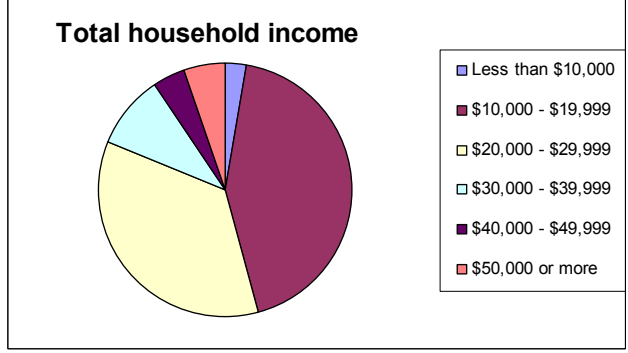


**Demographics**

**Main source of household income:**

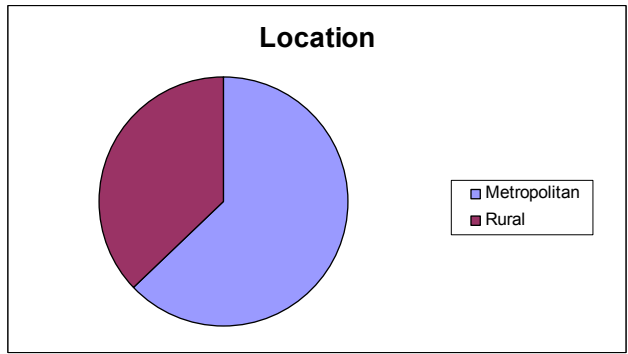
- Employment**
- Carer Payment**
- Pension**
- Self Funded Retiree/Superannuant**
- Other**
- None**

70% of respondents relied on government benefits for their main income, in particular either pensions or Carer Payments or a combination of the two. An additional 16% relied on government payments in combination with other sources, usually superannuation, investments or employment. 8% were self funded retirees or superannuants whilst only 5% indicated participation in the workforce either as employees or self employed.



**Location**

63% of respondents lived in metropolitan Adelaide with 37% living in rural areas of South Australia.





## Electricity Costs Follow up Survey

Electricity costs are a significant burden for Carers who rely on year round comfort for those they care for.

In late 2002, in response to Carer concerns about the price increases expected in January 2003, the Carers Association sought the views of Carers through an Electricity Costs Questionnaire. Carers were asked about their use of electricity or gas, the potential impact of electricity price rises, their use of, and attitude to, financial assistance, ways they would tackle increasing prices and their opinions on what the government could do to help them. A survey report, *Too Old and Too Slow to be a Burglar*, was published and widely distributed.

During 2003 the Carers Association has been part of discussions with government and suppliers about electricity prices and concessions and is keen to again hear from Carers about how the price rises have affected them.

### Special Caring Needs

Special caring needs that affect the use of electricity eg cooling, heating, equipment.  
Please describe.

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### Amount of Electricity Bills

What was the amount of your last quarterly electricity account? \$\_\_\_\_\_

Dates for account:\_\_\_\_\_

What was the amount for the same quarter last year (2002)? \$\_\_\_\_\_ (If you have it)

### How Have Price Rises Affected You?

How did you feel?

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What did you do?

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Have you changed your use of electricity this year (2003)? Yes No

If yes, in what way?

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Has changing to way you use electricity made a difference to the total bill? Yes No

What difference has it made?

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Have you experienced problems paying your bills since the price rises? Yes No

Did you seek assistance in paying these bills? Yes No

If yes, where?

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### Information

Did you receive adequate information about the price rises from the electricity retailer? Yes No

Did your account contain adequate explanation about the total of the bill? Yes No

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### Other Comments

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### Household Income

Main source of household income

Employment	Carer Payment	Pension
Self Funded Retiree/Superannuant	Other	None

Total household income per year (i.e. total all residents)

Less than \$10,000 ( <i>\$193/week</i> )	\$10,000 - \$19,999 ( <i>\$194 - \$384/week</i> )
\$20,000 - \$29,999 ( <i>\$385 - \$574/week</i> )	\$30,000 - \$39,999 ( <i>\$575 - \$769/week</i> )
\$40,000 - \$49,999 ( <i>\$770 - \$959/week</i> )	\$50,000 or more ( <i>\$960/week</i> )

### Any Other Comments

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**I am willing to be contacted by the Association regarding this survey** Yes No

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

NB: Individual Carers will not be identified in survey results.

**Please return this questionnaire by October 31<sup>st</sup> 2003 to:  
Carers Association PO Box 410 UNLEY SA 5041.**