

Phil Squire's answers in red below.

From: Kate Day <kate@commongrace.nz>
Sent: Thursday, 22 May 2025 4:34 pm
To: Phil Squire
Cc:
Subject: Re: NZ Herald series on energy hardship

Kia ora Phil,

Thank you for your response on 4 April. (And nice to see you yesterday!)

We have some follow-up questions so that we can accurately convey to the public whether or not you will take the steps we mentioned.

Because our questions are very specific, we intend to publish yes/no answers plus a small amount of further information. Space in articles will be limited and we will therefore need to summarise companies' responses.

Below are our follow-up questions, plus how we propose to summarise your answers from your current response. If we have misinterpreted, we welcome your corrections.

We would appreciate your follow-up answers by EOD next Wed 28 May.

Many thanks,

Kate

Question 1:(Before winter 2025) will you check that all your customers are on the cheapest plan that you offer for their energy use, and inform customers of any plans that would be cheaper for them?

We interpret your response as 'No'.

Under 'why not' we would include: We currently only offer two plans **for each household based on their meter configuration**, standard user or low user. We check customer electricity usage once/year in **spring (and at onboarding)** , to check they are on the right plan to start and let them know if they may be better off on another plan.

Follow up questions: Is my summary above correct?

Why have you chosen not to do this check for all customers ahead of winter? (Do you lack the staff resources? Have most 12month+ customers been checked recently?) We check in spring (oct/nov) as this gives us good lens to gauge last winter's use (which

effectively dominates the annual usage). As we have very simple offering and we would want to be sure customers are either well under or well over the low/standard user threshold. And TBH, with the phasing out of the Low user fixed charge regs, there's not that much difference between standard and low user plans unless you're using a lot or very little power, and then that's very obvious at signup.

Question 2: (Before winter 2025) will you permanently stop charging (and threatening to charge) disconnection or reconnection fees in cases of non-payment? If not, why not?

We interpret your response as 'Yes'.

We would add further information: Toast Electric already has a policy of not charging disconnection fees or reconnection fees for non-payment.

Question 3: Will you provide discounted electricity to people in hardship, for instance by not passing on price rises to this group, capping their bills or by giving free power?

We interpret your response as 'Yes'.

We would add further information:

"This is why we set up Toast Electric." or Toast is a not-for-profit with a mission to provide affordable electricity and healthy home support to those in hardship.

Toast has 250-300 customers who have been referred by community partners to their energy wellbeing programme. Toast provides them with all-year lower pricing than their previous retailer and also aims to discount their tariffs by 30% over winter months. They estimate these discounts will amount to \$70,000 off standard Toast tariffs during winter 2025.

Follow up questions: Is that an accurate summary?

Question 4: (Before winter 2025) Will you be transparent about whether your door is open to serving people in hardship, by telling us how many customers you turned away in 2024 due to credit score or concerns about credit worthiness?

We interpret your response as 'Yes - zero'.

We would add further information:

Toast does not decline customers due to their credit history (I'd delete the first sentence, as when someone applies to Toast, we do credit check – and then if it's a fail we refer to a community partner for financial mentoring, and offer a home energy check). Up to 25% of our customers are referred by community partners, and Toast accepts those customers without a credit check. If potential customers inquiring through the website do fail a credit check, Toast refers them to community partners, and if they accept financial mentoring support with that partner, Toast will usually take them on.

Toast does decline customers for other reasons, such as they are outside its operating region.

Follow up questions: Is that an accurate summary?

Thanks for your time answering these questions.

Kate Day | Co-Director