

Energy help turns Eddie's life around

Free coaching slashes power bills swiftly

A visit from an EnergyMate coach has helped Taupō stroke victim Eddie Rehu enjoy a warmer, drier home.

The energy plan the coach worked out with him has also shaved "big bucks" off his electricity bill.

EnergyMate is a free service for eligible households, led by the Electricity Retailers' Association and funded by electricity retailers, lines companies and the Government.

Rehu was referred to the service by Budget House and received his visit from EnergyMate coach Aroha – provided through Tūramatia – in late July.

He lives with one other person in a three-bedroom home that was drafty and cold. This meant high electricity use to power the heat pump, which is the house's only source of heating.

"Aroha was like a bright light that turned up at just the right time. Her smile was amazing," Rehu said.

"I was in a crisis because my electricity bills were out of control and I owed a bit of money. It was hard for me to deal with complex things after my stroke, but she sat me down and said 'Everything will be okay', which was the most helpful thing she could have done.

"We had a kōrero and she checked my hot water temperature and that my pipes were insulated.

"She gave me some door draft stoppers and they made a difference right away. She also gave me LED lightbulbs for the house. They're really bright but they're also energy savers."

The draft stoppers and LED bulbs were supplied by the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority.

The next thing to attend to was the curtains.

"I didn't have any so I was just using sheets. Aroha has arranged for me to get some free thermal curtains through local community organisation Te Kapua Whakapipi.

"I am still waiting for those but a lady down the street has given me a non-thermal set to use. They're making a difference and I try to mow her lawns to say thanks."

The curtains, the lights, the draft stoppers and not having to use the heat pump as much have reduced Rehu's monthly power bill by about \$140.

"It was just Aroha guiding me through what I should be doing to minimise costs. I reckon the thermal curtains will help get the bill down even more."

Rehu said the best thing Aroha did



Taupō man Eddie Rehu and EnergyMate coach Aroha celebrate a lightbulb moment.

was call his electricity company to find a solution to his energy debt.

"She was like the mediator, which really took a lot of the stress away. I wasn't in the right place to work things through myself but together we negotiated a solution.

"My job was then to call Winz, who agreed to pay some of my outstanding bill. That meant my electricity company was willing to waive a

portion of it. I'm now paying Winz back, but at a manageable rate.

"I know a lot of people out there who are too proud to ask for help, but the call to my electricity company has really turned things around."

EnergyMate is currently available in West Auckland, South Auckland, Rotorua, Whakatāne, Taupō, Hastings/Napier, Christchurch, Timaru, Oamaru, and Dunedin.

Households in energy hardship can be referred to the programme by their electricity company, their participating financial mentoring service, or some healthy homes support services. So far it has helped more than 2500 households nationwide.

 For more information and great energy-saving tips visit energymate.nz.



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