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EnergyMate supporting 800 households in energy hardship

Electricity retailers, lines companies, and community budgeting services have partnered to deliver an expanded pilot for EnergyMate, a free in-home energy coaching service for Kiwis at risk of energy hardship, Electricity Retailers' Association Acting Chief Executive Mike Munro says.

The expanded pilot was launched in Christchurch today by Hon Megan Woods, Minister for Energy and Resources. In 2020, EnergyMate will visit 800 households across Christchurch, Dunedin, Kaitaia, Levin, Lower Hutt, Rotorua, South Auckland, and South Taranaki.

During an in-home visit, trained EnergyMate coaches:

- Connect the household with their power company to ensure they're on a power plan and payment terms that best suit the household's needs.
- Give advice on heating the home in the cheapest way, and on using appliances efficiently.
- Check hot water and shower flow.
- Deliver free LED lightbulbs for instant power savings.

"The electricity sector works hard to support all consumers, and we're proud to be doing our bit to help Kiwis with their electricity use over winter and for those affected by COVID-19.

"Energy hardship is driven by a number of factors—someone struggling to pay their power bill is likely also struggling with a low income or unemployment and, crucially a low-quality, hard to heat home.

"In the initial EnergyMate pilot in 2019, over half the homes visited didn't have an efficient heating source. A third had an inadequate or unknown level of insulation.

"An independent evaluation found EnergyMate succeeded in helping households become more energy efficient. In follow-up interviews, families indicated they had a better understanding of their power use, their home's energy performance, and their power bill.

"We want all families to live in warm, dry homes with affordable energy costs. No family should have to choose between putting food on the table or turning their heater on.

"We've partnered with community-based budgeting organisations to deliver the service. They have a strong understanding of hardship issues and are well-placed to deliver targeted support for Kiwi families in need.

"One sector alone can't solve poverty—it's driven by education, incomes, and our country's poor housing stock—but the electricity sector is committed to working together to help Kiwis at risk of hardship, and that's why we're running EnergyMate."

EnergyMate is run by the Electricity Retailers' Association, delivered by community budgeting support services, and is funded by the electricity retailers Contact, Genesis, Mercury, Meridian, Nova, Trustpower, and Prime, the lines companies Electra, Powerco, Top Energy, Unison, and Wellington Electricity, and by EECA.

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About ERANZ

The Electricity Retailers' Association of New Zealand (ERANZ) represents companies that sell electricity to Kiwi households and businesses. Our members supply 92% of New Zealand's electricity to Kiwis.

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