

Free bulbs to cut power use

Laurilee McMichael

They say there's no such thing as a free lunch — but in Tūrangi on Saturday, there is such a thing as free lightbulbs.

The giveaway of five free LED ecobulbs per household, worth at least \$100, comes from the King Country Electric Power Trust. Some 10,000 King Country homes in Tūrangi, Taumarunui and Ohakune should have received a letter from the Trust this week, with a voucher for five free, latest generation Ecobulb LED energy-saving light bulbs. The bulbs last up to 30 years and use up to 90 per cent less electricity than the inefficient light bulbs they replace.

Tūrangi-based Trustee Sandra Greenslade says many people are unaware that cheap incandescent lightbulbs cost a fortune long term as they use much more power than an energy-efficient LED bulb. She and husband Denis noticed the difference in power bills when they changed every bulb to LEDs.

At last year's Energy Trusts of NZ conference in Wellington, Sandra saw a presentation by Ecobulb managing director Chris Mardon on a similar initiative his company had carried out in Ashburton where the local energy trust had distributed five free ecobulbs to every household. She suggested the King Country Electric Power Trust could do the same.

This Saturday, anyone can take vouchers to the Tūrangi Senior Citizens Hall and select any combination of five Ecobulb LEDs. This includes halogen, bayonet and screw-in LEDs and screw-in retrofit Ecobulb LED downlights, worth between \$19.90 and \$39.70 each, depending on the type.

Sandra says this Saturday was chosen as it is Wellington anniversary weekend and the Trust hopes holiday home



Sandra Greenslade of the King Country Electric Power Trust with some of the Ecobulb LED light bulbs. Beneficiaries of the Trust, including 4550 in the Tūrangi area, should receive a voucher this week for five free Ecobulbs, which must be claimed on Saturday.

Photo / Laurilee McMichael

owners in the area can take advantage of the offer. Tūwharetoa Health Charitable Trust staff have volunteered to help at the giveaway, which runs from 9am to 5pm.

If people are not going to be around on Saturday, they can give their voucher to a neighbour or friend to collect the ecobulbs on their behalf so they don't miss out. Sandra says if people need help collecting or installing their ecobulbs, they should not be shy to ask.

"Tūrangi is a really caring community where people help each other out. If your neighbour is elderly, go and get their voucher for them and go down and collect their bulbs," says Sandra.

"The idea is that people will put them in the most highly-used area of their house — the lounge, dining room, kitchen

and bathroom. And the most important thing is that they go home and do it immediately. Throw away your old bulbs. Don't keep them — it's false economy. When a bulb blows, go to the shop and try and replace each one from now on with an LED bulb. We know they are expensive but once you've got your whole house on LEDs your electricity and your lines bill will plummet."

Sandra says people are put off buying ecobulbs because of the upfront cost but don't realise that the cheap incandescent bulbs will wind up costing much more over their lifetime.

"They [incandescent bulbs] are cheap to buy, they are 80 cents a bulb — and you put them in and they draw down so much power. If you have them switched on and you go out to

your meter you can see your meter just flicking over.

"Alongside your oven, your lighting is the highest [power] use in your house and your lights can be on for 12 hours a day in winter."

The giveaway includes ecobulb downlights, which screw into existing downlight fittings and use up to 90 per cent less power than standard downlights.

Sandra says if people don't need the free ecobulbs, they should keep their voucher and give it to their neighbour or somebody else they know, or bring it to the hall to be passed on to somebody who needs it. If you want ecobulbs but can't redeem your voucher on Saturday or find someone to do it for you, hold onto it. If there are ecobulbs left over, another giveaway may be arranged.

Ecobulb managing director Chris Mardon said the company's goal is to save enough electricity to power New Zealand for one year, and it is half way there.

"Ultimately we want to replace every single one of the 31 million inefficient light bulbs in New Zealand homes with Ecobulb LEDs. This would save New Zealanders \$570 million per year on their power bills."

The King Country Electric Power Trust Ecobulb LED Project is expected to save King Country power consumers a collective \$6 million on their power bills over the next 10 years and trust chairman Adie Doyle says the average home could save up to \$930 on their power bills over the next decade by swapping five of its most frequently used, inefficient light bulbs to Ecobulb LEDs.

■ Take your Ecobulb voucher to the Tūrangi Senior Citizens Hall this Saturday between 9am to 5pm to claim your five free Ecobulbs. Sandra advises getting there early to avoid the rush. TrustPower will be running a sausage sizzle.