PURCHASING A NEW FRIDGE OR FREEZER

Before purchasing a new domestic refrigeration appliance, think about how much capacity the club needs. If you have multiple units that are rarely full, try and consolidate their contents into any modern, energy efficient units you may already have first. You might find you don't need that extra appliance (and the extra upfront and energy costs that come with it) after all!

However, if the club does need to replace an appliance, the Energy Rating System makes choosing an efficient model simple. Every new domestic fridge and freezer sold in New Zealand is labelled with a sticker displaying a simple star rating, and an energy consumption figure. The more stars an appliance has, the more energy efficient the appliance is. If you are comparing differing sizes and types of appliance, you can use the annual energy consumption figure shown on the bottom half of the label. The lower the figure, the less electricity it will use, and the cheaper it will be to run. The best fridges and freezers have a four star rating or better, and are labeled with the blue ENERGY STAR mark. Such models are the most energy efficient available, using an average of 40% less energy than non-accredited models.

In addition to paying attention to an appliance's ENERGY STAR rating, think carefully about how much internal capacity the club really needs on a day-to-day basis. Many clubs purchase large fridges or freezers and only use a small fraction of their capacity, consuming more energy than is necessary and spending more money up front. On the other hand, purchasing a small unit that will be overstocked most of the time forces the appliance to work harder, consuming more energy and reducing its lifetime.

HOW TO RUN APPLIANCES MOST EFFICIENTLY

A few simple maintenance tasks are key to keeping your refrigeration appliances operating efficiently:

- **Clean and inspect the door seals** at the start and end of the season. Seals that have perished or torn can allow warm, moist air into the appliance, causing frost buildup and forcing the appliance to consume more electricity to maintain its temperature. Cleaning is important as spills and stains invite mold and mildew, which accelerate seal deterioration. A useful trick is to place a torch inside and close the door; if you can see light escaping, the seals are not doing their job. If the seals are in poor condition and the appliance is quite old, seek to replace it. Otherwise, contact a refrigeration specialist to have the seals changed.

- **Keep your appliances defrosted**. A layer of frost insulates the appliance's heat exchanger from the storage area, meaning it has to work harder to maintain the correct temperature. If you notice frost buildup exceeding 5 mm, it's time to defrost.

- **Leave air gaps** all around your refrigeration appliances, as specified by the manufacturer. Fridges and freezers remove heat from the interior and expel it from radiator coils on the rear of the appliance. If there isn't enough airflow to this area, it is more difficult for heat to escape, forcing the appliance to work harder. This consumes more electricity and shortens its lifetime. For the same reason, it's also wise to inspect the radiator coils once or twice a year, and clean them if dirty.

**Disclaimer:** Always consult with a professional before purchasing or making changes to a refrigeration system. The above information is intended as a guide only. LiteClub accepts no responsibility for negative outcomes incurred.