



Listen Assist Resolve

29 June 2011

Ms Khayen Prentice
Regulatory Review – Smart Meters
Essential Services Commission
Level 2, 35 Spring Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

By email: khayen.prentice@esc.vic.gov.au

Dear Ms Prentice

Re: Essential Services Commission Smart Meter Regulatory Review - Capacity Control and Verifying Bills (Draft Decision)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide further comment on the Essential Services Commission (ESC)'s *Smart Meters Regulatory Review – Capacity Control and Verifying Bills* (Draft Decision).

The Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) (EWOV) supports the ESC's decisions to:

- Defer the introduction of capacity control or load control products. EWOV agrees that further research and clarity is required on how load restriction and/or capacity control will affect consumers and their appliances.
- Defer the use of supply capacity products for credit management purposes until after 31 December 2013. EWOV maintains its position that supply capacity products should not be used for the purpose of credit management.
- Amend the Energy Retail Code to ensure retailers continue to provide a start index read on customers' bills. Customers have an expectation that they should be able to reconcile consumption on their bill with consumption on their meter.
- Not require distributors to send the customer a reminder notice or to leave a final reading card at the customer's premises. However, EWOV recommends that distributors maintain good records so that if a customer queries the final meter read, at the time of the meter exchange, then the distributor can provide substantiation of that read. Currently, some distributors are taking photographs of the meter at the time of an exchange. EWOV has found this helpful in resolving customer queries and complaints. However, not all distributors are able to provide such detail and have not maintained

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records for extended periods of time. Additionally, the meter may have been destroyed (after three months) prior to the first bill being issued and this can also be problematic in resolving customer complaints.

We trust the above comments are helpful. Should you require further information or have any queries, please contact Belinda Crivelli, Senior Research and Communications Officer, on (03) 9672 4460 or at Belinda.Crivelli@ewov.com.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fiona McLeod".

Fiona McLeod
Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria)