

Mr John Pierce
Chairman
Australian Energy Market Commission
PO Box A2449
Sydney South NSW 1235

Submitted via www.aemc.gov.au

5 June 2014

Dear Mr Pierce,

Submission on customer access to information rule change request (ERC0171)

EnerNOC is grateful for the opportunity to comment on this rule change request.

EnerNOC is an energy management company, currently managing over 24 GW of load sourced from over 14,000 commercial and industrial sites across markets in North America, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. As well as offering much of this load into energy, capacity, and ancillary services markets of varied designs, we also assist customers in improving their efficiency and minimising their spending on energy.

1 We support the principles

EnerNOC strongly supports the principle, which appears to be the intent of the proposed rule, that customers should freely and easily be able to access the full detail of their energy data, and extend such access to their agents.

Such access is crucial for customers to be able to make properly informed decisions about their consumption, their retail contracting, and their participation in the market.

It is important that access to this energy data is not allowed to be frustrated by parties which benefit from customers not making well informed decisions. Anecdotes we have heard suggest that this is occurring with some retailers at present. The provision in the rule change proposal for retailers to be able to charge for access to data under some circumstances opens a potential avenue for continuing such frustration.

2 The Green Button initiative

The Green Button initiative in the US provides a useful comparison.¹ While participation is not mandatory (because the US lacks a federal regulator with jurisdiction over retail metering issues) the intended outcome is the same: customers have access to their energy data at no cost, and can extend that access to third parties, again at no cost.

The initiative has led to the development of comprehensive technical standards,² which have been adopted widely by utilities and third parties. These standards include a new file format for energy data. This has the clever feature that a single file provides easily understandable summary data when viewed in a web browser while also containing the full raw data in a form which is easy to process.

Despite the attractions of the Green Button format, we recommend that NEM12 and NEM13 be specified as the required raw data format, as this will minimise implementation costs. However, if for some reason it is considered desirable to use some other format, then it would be better to use the Green Button format than to reinvent the wheel.

3 Responses to consultation questions

Our answers to the relevant questions in the consultation paper are below:

Q1 Do you consider that the proposed issues to consider are appropriate for this rule change request? Are there any other issues that we should consider?

Yes, the proposed issues are appropriate.

Q3a Do you think it is appropriate that the NER be amended to allow a customer to access its consumption data by requesting that data from its DNSP?

Yes.

Q3b Should MDPs be able to provide electricity consumption data directly to customers or their agents?

Yes.

Q4a What is the nature and magnitude of costs on market participants of providing data in raw format and summary format to their customers?

We agree with the COAG Energy Council that market participants should be able to provide raw NEM12/NEM13 format data without incurring significant costs:

¹ See e.g. <http://greenbuttondata.org/>

² See e.g. <http://collaborate.nist.gov/twiki-sggrid/bin/view/SmartGrid/GreenButtonInitiative>

they are simple formats, and all market participants already have systems to handle them.

For those market participants whose customer web portals do not yet allow for downloads of energy data, there will be some implementation costs involved in adding this functionality. Jemena and United Energy jointly spent \$538,181 developing a complete customer web portal, which includes provision of meter data as a small part of its functionality.³ It should be much cheaper to add this functionality to an extant customer web portal.

After these initial set-up costs, the marginal cost of providing data to a customer through this self-service facility will be very near zero.

If data is also to be provided in a standardised summary format, then some work will be needed to develop tools to transform raw data into this format. The total costs could be reduced if a reference implementation of this conversion tool were developed and released under a licence which would allow it to be used by market participants,⁴ to avoid them each having to do the same implementation work.

An alternative approach would be to provide this summarisation tool freely to customers – either as downloadable software, or as a web-based tool. This way, market participants need only be required to provide raw data.

Even if no obligation was placed on anyone to do so, it seems overwhelmingly likely that several parties would develop and release such tools. This is what has happened with the comparable Green Button initiative in the US.⁵

The Green Button initiative also provides a standardised method for customers to subscribe to feeds of consumption data, or authorise agents to do so, so as to avoid having to make repeated requests.⁶ This robust, automated approach could be adopted here. Alternatively, the existing de facto NEM standard of manually-configured FTP or email delivery of NEM12 files could be preserved, which would minimise implementation costs.

Q4c Should the NER stipulate a specific period of time in relation to which the electricity consumption data must cover? If so, what is the appropriate period of time?

For a one-off request, two years (or since the customer moved into the premises, whichever is the shorter) seems appropriate: it gives enough history to distinguish trends or change-points from seasonal variations.

³ Jemena, *Extract from Response to 2011 Regulatory Information Notice – Demand Management Incentive Allowance Report*, Non-confidential version, 31 July 2012, p.7, available from http://www.aer.gov.au/sites/default/files/JEN_2011_DMIA_Report_-_extracted_from_2011_JEN_RIN_Response.pdf

⁴ For example, one of the less restrictive open source licences.

⁵ There are currently 65 “Green Button Apps” listed at [http://en.openei.org/apps/?keyword=Green Button Apps](http://en.openei.org/apps/?keyword=Green+Button+Apps)

⁶ “Green Button Connect My Data”, described at <http://greenbuttondata.org/developers/>

It is important also to support requests for ongoing provision of data, such that the customer (or their agent) receives updates each time the meter is read. This allows a customer to track their usage and predict what their bill will be. In this case, while the initial data delivery should include a lot of history, for the sake of efficiency, subsequent deliveries should contain only new and revised data.

Q5 Is 10 business days an appropriate time frame for market participants to respond to a request from their customers for their electricity consumption data?

Customers should be able access their data immediately through a self-service facility.

It is only where the customer requests the data in such a way that it requires manual handling – e.g. requests in writing, or by phone – (a “manual request”) that it makes sense to set a multiple business day timeframe. In this case, 10 business days seems appropriate: it gives plenty of time to sort out any technical issues.

Q6a How often should customers be able to request their energy consumption information free of charge in the NERR?

Where the customer is making the request through a self-service channel, for electronic delivery, they should be able to request it as often as they like, at no charge.

Manual requests should be rare. To prevent abuse, it may be appropriate to allow charges for excessively frequent manual requests – say more than once a month (for the same NMI). Billing periods do not seem relevant – customers do not only use data for checking bills.

If the customer is making manual requests because the market participant’s self-service channel is not working correctly (or there is no self-service channel, if this is to be allowed), then no charges should apply.

If the customer requests data to be provided in some non-standard way – e.g. hard copies, or with some value-added processing – then charges should be allowed. However, it would be advisable to require the market participant to inform the customer that they are entitled to receive data in the standard way at no charge.

Q8 Should proposed rule 56A of the NERR only apply to small customers or should it apply to all customers, which would include large customers?

It should apply to all customers, so as to facilitate all customers in making informed decisions.

Q9a What is the appropriate term to refer to these third parties (eg agents, authorised parties) in the NER?

“Authorised party” seems clear.

Q9b Beyond existing privacy laws, should the NER specify: the nature of consent a customer must give to authorise a person to access its data; and any additional privacy obligations on authorised parties, retailers or DNSPs in relation to the disclosure of electricity consumption data?

These should be specified in the NER so as to provide clarity and avoid differing interpretations between market participants.

I would be happy to provide further detail on these comments, if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Troughton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr Paul Troughton
Director of Regulatory Affairs