

Establishing values of customer reliability

Submission to the AEMC

7 June, 2018



1.0 About the submitter

Master Electricians Australia (MEA) is the trade association representing electrical contractors, and is recognised by industry, government and the community as the electrical industry's leading business partner, knowledge source and advocate. We have members in every state and territory, giving us direct experience in navigating the disparate regulatory regimes.

2.0 Reliability as it relates to connection times

Master Electricians Australia strongly supports the proposal that the AER assumes responsibility for establishing Values of Consumer Reliability (VCRs). Further, we support the steps the AER will be required to take in order to estimate and maintain VCRs, and the proposed timeframes and mechanisms for doing so. In this brief submission, we wish to draw the AEMC's attention to a critical piece of the reliability puzzle from the consumer's point of view. Of all the players in the national electricity supply chain, Master Electricians Australia's members are the ones who have the most direct, in-person contact with customers. This occurs often when those customers are seeking to be connected to the grid for the first time. As a result, MEA members are uniquely positioned to provide feedback on this experience.

It is our very strong view that the time taken to connect a service should form a key part of any consideration of reliability. We know from recent experience that service connection times in many states and territories have blown out to take up to 12 weeks. This has been a function of having the national Power of Choice regulations overlaid on top of individual state or territory jurisdictions. The process for any additions or alterations to an existing service is even longer, potentially delaying efforts by consumers to carry out works to improve the reliability or capacity of their service.

While the issues that lie at the heart of this problem are beyond the scope of this review, the results go very much to the issue of reliability and the customer's perceptions of the value of reliability. Put simply, there can be no greater disappointment in terms of reliability than being unable to secure a connection in a reasonable period of time. For this reason, we maintain that any effort to measure Values of Consumer Reliability must take account not only of existing connections, but also of those connections that are planned and/or requested but cannot be progressed because of red tape and bureaucracy. There are a number of fronts on which Master Electricians Australia is fighting to have that waiting time reduced, but recognising it as a part of the consumer reliability puzzle, and applying an appropriate value to those delays, will help create clarity around the true impact on consumers of one of the greatest reliability challenges currently facing the national electricity network.

3.0 Contact

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