



Real-time data for consumers

We are seeking feedback on a rule change request to improve consumers' access to real-time data from smart meters

On 10 October 2024, the Commission published a consultation paper in response to a rule change request from Energy Consumers Australia (ECA) which recommends changes to improve access to real-time data for consumers and their authorised representatives.

The rule change request follows recommendations from our Review of the regulatory framework for metering services (Review). Given significant developments in the market since our Review, the consultation paper re-tests the case for change. We are seeking stakeholder feedback on the potential costs and benefits of improving access to real-time data from smart meters and potential implementation considerations of improving access.

Better access to real-time data could potentially help consumers save money on bills

The energy landscape is undergoing unprecedented changes in response to market and technology developments, changing community expectations, and the shift to a cleaner energy system. Millions of Australian households and businesses are embracing the change and adopting consumer energy resources (CER) like solar panels and batteries.

Smart meters make these changes possible. They play a crucial role in the energy transition and contribute to the electricity system becoming more intelligent, responsive, efficient and consumer-centric.

Smart meters can enable access to energy usage information in real-time. The rule change request considers that access to this information facilitates a range of benefits to consumers. It identifies the following benefits of improving access for all consumers:

1. Consumers would have more control over their bills — consumers would have better insights to inform their energy use.
2. Consumers would save money by avoiding inefficient duplicative costs — consumers would not need to incur additional costs to install separate devices to access real-time data.
3. More consumers would take up services which help lower bills — improved access to real-time data may improve product and service offerings.

ECA considers that consumers' access to real-time data is limited

Some parties already have access to real-time data through devices that interface or communicate with the electricity meter, or through applications and portals provided by retailers or CER service providers.

However, the rule change request considers that this access is not available to all consumers with smart meters. This means that all consumers may not be receiving the full range of benefits from real-time data. The request highlights the following barriers constraining consumers' access to real-time data:

- **cost** — customers or their representatives are currently required to install and pay for separate devices to access real-time data from the smart meter, which may be inefficient because the smart meter could likely provide the data at lower cost.
- **challenges with commercial negotiation** — customers' authorised representatives have not been able to negotiate access to real-time data with metering parties on fair and reasonable terms.

- **latency of alternatives** — currently, consumers may receive smart meter data at a lag, which can limit the utility of having the information.

Improving access to real-time data may be significantly costly

While there may be benefits of improving access to real-time data from smart meters, some parties will also incur costs to implement an improved access framework. For example, metering service providers may incur costs to:

1. share data using telecommunications pathways
2. upgrade customers' metering infrastructure

There may be additional costs to multiple parties to administer any improved access framework.

The Commission considers that there may be a range of costs depending on the requirements imposed on parties to facilitate access. These costs would likely be passed on to consumers in their bills.

We are seeking stakeholder feedback on the benefits and costs of improving access to real-time data.

Improving access to real-time data may be complex to implement

The consultation paper takes the opportunity to seek input on the design of a framework for improving access to real-time data, should stakeholders consider that access must be improved. This acknowledges the complexity of implementing such a framework and the corresponding benefit of identifying issues early in the rule change determination process.

We are seeking stakeholder views on changes that may be needed to improve access to real-time data, including but not necessarily limited to:

- whether parties should have an explicit right to access real-time data under the National Electricity Rules
- how real-time data should be defined, including the frequency at which the data would be received
- how real-time data could be shared and received, for instance through smart meter communication ports or a form of remote access
- who would pay for real-time data
- how interoperability could be achieved, ensuring real-time data is readable across multiple different devices
- how privacy and cyber security would be maintained
- other considerations including data handling requirements and learnings from other frameworks.

Submissions are due by 7 November 2024

Written submissions responding to this consultation paper must be lodged with Commission by 7 November 2024 via the Commission's website, www.aemc.gov.au.



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