



Meter read and billing frequency

Publication of draft rule and draft rule determination

The AEMC invites submissions on a draft rule that requires retailers to issue a bill to a small customer on a standing offer at least once every 100 days, rather than the current requirement of three months. Submissions are due by 12 May 2016.

The draft rule

This change is intended to provide retailers with opportunity to provide more small customers with a bill that is based on their actual consumption, thus reducing the amount of estimated bills issued. The draft rule applies to both electricity and gas retail standing offers. The AEMC made a more preferable draft rule, rather than the rule proposed by Ergon Energy Queensland (Ergon).

Bills that are based on actual consumption provide consumers with better information about how they use energy. This helps them to plan and budget for their bills, and also assists them in managing their usage to lower the energy charges they may face.

However, the benefits derived from billing on actual consumption need to be balanced against the frequency of billing. Frequent bills provide consumers with more timely information about the costs that they are incurring. Delayed bills may not provide consumers with the timely information that they need in order to adjust their energy usage to manage the charges that they may face.

The draft rule recognises this balance. It broadly maintains the frequency of billing provided for under the existing obligations in the National Energy Retail Rules (NERR) but provides retailers with an increased window of time to receive a meter read from a Metering Data Provider. This is likely to enable retailers to issue more accurate bills.

Consultation process

The draft determination and draft rule are both available on the AEMC's website. Stakeholders are invited to make written submissions in response to the draft rule determination and draft rule by no later than **12 May 2016**.

The rule change request

The NERR require retailers to issue small customers on a standing offer with a bill at least once every three months. However, Metering Data Providers are only required to use best endeavours to collect meter data at least once every three months under the Australian Energy Market Operator's (AEMO) *Service Level Procedure: Metering Data Provider Services*.

Ergon considers this an inconsistency between the obligations on retailers and Metering Data Providers, which results in retailers issuing estimated bills if the Metering Data Provider has not provided them with a meter reading.

To address this issue, Ergon seeks to amend the NERR to enable a retailer to delay issuing a bill to a small customer supplied under a standing offer until a meter read is provided by the relevant Metering Data Provider in accordance with AEMO's Procedure.

Ergon considers that its rule change request will enhance consumer experience and confidence in retail markets, by providing for bills to be based on actual consumption and reducing the number of estimated bills issued.

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