



Maintaining life support customer registration when switching

Consultation on proposal to make life support customer switching easier

The Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) has commenced consultation on a rule change request from the Energy and Water Ombudsman of New South Wales (EWON), which proposes amendments to the National Electricity Retail Rules (NERR). The request aims to facilitate the transfer of life support information when life support customers change premises or retailer.

In its rule change request, EWON raised concerns that the costs associated with securing a new medical certificate each time a customer changes retailer may deter life support customers from accessing competitive retail offers. EWON proposed that changes be made to enable outgoing retailers or distributors to share relevant medical information with the new retailer or distributor selected by the customer.

Stakeholders are invited to make written submissions by 3 September 2020.

Background

Life support obligations in the NERR are designed to provide additional consumer protections for premises that have a person using life support equipment that relies on electricity to operate, and retailers and distributors are required to register such premises. The rules impose obligations on retailers and distributors to provide additional safeguards for consumers using life support equipment with respect to de-energisation of premises and notification of planned interruptions. In order to access these protections, life support customers are required to provide medical confirmation. Currently, the NERR allows energy businesses to require a customer to resubmit medical confirmation in a number of situations when a life support customer changes premises or retailer.

Issues for consideration

The rule change request raises a range of issues that are further explained in the consultation paper. Stakeholders are invited to comment on these issues, which include:

- the appropriate allocation of responsibility between life support customers and energy businesses with respect to the resubmission medical confirmation
- the impact on life support customers of higher barriers for engagement in the retail market, including the costs of securing medical confirmation each time a life support customer changes premises or retailer
- the costs and benefits of retailers and distributors sharing of medical confirmation forms, with particular consideration to privacy issues and costs of changes to existing systems and policies.

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