

IPART
Doc No. Doc No.

Currawarna Rural Fire Brigade



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15 March 2002

Mr Thomas G Parry
Chairman
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
of New South Wales
PO Box Q290
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Dear Mr Parry

Submission: Review of regulated retail electricity tariffs

This brief submission is tendered on behalf of the Currawarna Rural Fire Brigade to bring to the Tribunal's attention the inequalities existing under the current retail electricity tariffs which are applied to organisations such as ours and to suggest a fairer regime of tariffs by for example the introduction of a new tariff category.

Under the Terms of Reference for this review our Brigade would be classed as a "small retail customer" and it would appear that unless the Tribunal sets a special tariff category for organisations such as ours electricity charges will continue to increase over time until the 'target' level is reached.

Over the past few years in an endeavour to have electricity costs reduced or waived our Brigade has approached several relevant authorities including Great Southern Energy (now Country Energy – our electricity supplier); Wagga City Council; Daryl Maguire MP, Member for Wagga; and Kim Yeadon MP, Minister for Energy.

Responses indicated IPART sets electricity tariffs and the avenue available to organisations such as ours is the Tribunal's current review. Hence this submission.

Ours is a non-profit organisation servicing a small rural community and is run entirely by volunteers. In addition our Brigade also provides an invaluable service to the local electricity authority by attending fires caused by infrastructure owned by that authority.

Although electricity usage by our Brigade is minimal the current standing charges are prohibitive. Currently "business" category standing charges are levied on our organisation. Our Brigade's membership is relatively small and annual income is such that almost half is paid out in electricity charges. This leaves very little to cover other essential costs.

One of our members suggested we should operate the Brigade without electricity. Although this is a possibility it would be a last option. Another suggestion was to charge the electricity authority for each fire caused by that authority's infrastructure which would in turn more than pay our electricity charges.

In conclusion could you please take the above facts into consideration when deciding on retail tariff categories. In the circumstances it may be feasible to recommend the provision of electricity to non-profit, voluntary, emergency services organisations such as ours in return for volunteers attending fires caused by electricity authority infrastructure.

If you need any further information or clarification of anything in this submission I can be contacted by phone or fax on the numbers provided on the previous page.

Yours sincerely



Nan Astridge
Secretary/Treasurer