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Date of submission: Thursday, 28 June 2018

Submission: IPART review of electricity retailers' metering practices in NSW

We are a small Solar & Electrical contracting company based on the mid north coast of NSW.

Several years ago we trained, at considerable cost, to become Level 2 ASP's. This was primarily to install metering to our solar customers. Our business model was a one-stop-shop providing a turnkey solution to our solar customers. We would arrange for the system install, along with the metering, to be installed at the same time on the same day leaving the customer's 100% operational.

The metering changes have effected this situation for the worse.

I have one customer currently who we completed their 5kW solar install on March 1 2018. All paperwork was submitted for connection of a new smart meter with Red Energy promptly. They customer has been advised that tomorrow, 29 June, they will have their new smart meter installed.

We do not think this time frame is acceptable. Unfortunately this is not an isolated incident with the average wait for a smart meter install around 90 days.

We would ideally like some autonomy returned to our business in regards to smart meter installation. It is made overly complicated due to the multiple energy retailers and their non-standardised procedures for new meter installs.

Information from retailers is extremely difficult to obtain. Email enquiries to them are often left unanswered. The only option often is a long wait time on hold to their call centres who regularly provide us with conflicting information. It should surely be compulsory for all retailers to have clearly written guidelines on the process of meter upgrade, installation or repair. This does not seem to be the case at all. It appears as though they are playing catch up and were completely unprepared for this new arrangement.

In conclusion, my customers are not happy to pay thousands of dollars for a solar system installation they can not turn on for 3 months, even if the smart meter install is "free".