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Retailers' metering practices in NSW  
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal  
PO Box K35  
Haymarket Post Shop NSW 1240

Dear Dr Boxall

The Housing Industry Association (HIA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a further submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) regarding the draft review findings. Many of our members across New South Wales (NSW) have been significantly impacted by the contestable metering (Power of Choice) reforms that were introduced in December last year.

The introduction of these new requirements has meant that builders and owners of newly constructed homes have faced significant delays in getting power provided to site and meters connected. In some instances members have experienced delays upwards of 16 weeks but more commonly 8-12 weeks for a process that previously took on average 1-2 weeks.

In many situations members have completed new homes ready for handover to homeowners however, homeowners have not been able to move in due to the delay in connecting the new smart (advanced) meters. This has occurred despite requests for meters being placed with retailers at the commencement of the building project.

Whilst we have seen some progress of late in getting new smart meters connected in a more timely fashion, many of our members in locations outside of Sydney are still facing substantial delays.

HIA has been actively contributing to both this review and to the proposal draft rule changes being considered by the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC).

HIA is supportive of the recent draft rule determination for as hard maximum of 6 days to get a new meter installed, and where this is not achieved civil penalties will be applied to the electricity retailers.

However, we continue to request that the AEMC and state regulators expedite this process rather than wait until 1 January 2019 to implement this rule change. Recently the SA Government implemented similar changes to that proposed by the AEMC, ahead of the national regulations in acknowledging that these delays have gone on too long.

In HIA's submission to this review and the AEMC rule change process we identified that a timeframe alone for installation would only be part of the solution, and other concurrent items would need to be implemented to address delays in connections. Encouragingly some of these aspects have been picked up in the draft report.

This includes streamlining the process whereby a builder/home owner or the builders electrician place a call to a single entity and when a new smart meter is required to be installed and the retailer and network provider co-ordinate between themselves electing the mains to the site, connection of the meter and commissioning upon completion. This would reflect the situation pre-December last year.

HIA considers that for retailer to be able to provide timely installations, that changes to processes are required to permit a builder's electrician, or a contractor to them who has specific qualifications, is able to run the mains power from the pit or pole to site, hang the meter and power it up.

In reading the National Electricity Rules and our discussions with the various bodies our understanding is there is not legislative impediments that would restrict this process from being implemented as a matter of course.

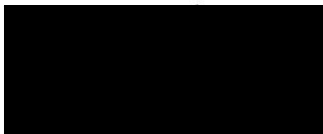
Whilst we understand that this may present challengers given the split duties under the new legislation between the retailer and the network provider, and metering providers and metering co-ordinators, but we consider that this can be resolved through agreements between these parties. These matters are essentially operational issues, and should be seamless.

An additional aspect of our submission that appears to have been picked up, is for retailers to develop on their website or through a portal (such as the B2B system), a means of customers being able to track the progress of their job from logging it to completion. This will ensure transparency and traceability for metering connections for customers. This has already been implemented for other services and we are aware some electrical retailer have started to look at this.

Finally, any assistance to resolve these problems arising from the review by IPART and subsequent action taken by the NSW Government would be welcomed by the residential building home industry.

The long delays which are being experienced by builders and homeowners in regional areas of NSW have caused and will continue to cause significant disruption to the industry. It is important that an expedited resolution to these issues faced by builders, electrical contractors and ultimately, homeowners is found.

Yours sincerely  
HOUSING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION LIMITED



Craig Jennion  
Acting Executive Director – NSW