

Your Ref:
Our Ref:
Date: 03 August 2018

Dr Peter Boxall AO
Chair
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
PO Box K35
HAYMARKET POST SHOP NSW 1240

Dear Sir

We are:

Electrical Contractors working in the Hastings area NSW. We hold a broad spectrum of licences and accreditations including:

- Accredited ASP Level 2
- Accredited Origin/Acumen meter installer.

The following are some of the issues we wish to raise:

1. In order to become an accredited Origin/Acumen installer training was undertaken that was provided in Port Macquarie.

We have not been accredited with AGL/Active Stream as the training would require travel to Sydney.



Regional training should be available.

2. We have incurred significant upfront and ongoing costs obtaining the equipment necessary to be accredited and remain so. Because of some variation in equipment requirement additional costs would be incurred to be accredited with other Meter Providers.

Standardisation of equipment requirements would be beneficial

3. Previously, meters were kept in-stock and we were able to attend to the connection of the site to the network and the installation of the meter of the meter at the beginning of the building works.

Now, builders are having to work sites without the power being connected for weeks into the building process. It is taking about 4 weeks and often longer before a meter can be installed. The builders and sub-contractors are being forced to invest in generators and additional battery tools so that the job can be progressed.



This means:

- Increased costs;
- Increased time on site and administratively;
- Increased on-site safety risks;
- Frustrations being expressed to us; and,
- Some loss in confidence in our ability to provide the required service.

4. Charges to customers

Our customers are being told things like [excerpt of email dated 11 December 2017 to our customer from Origin - note identifying details have been removed]:

"Hello,

Just letting you know we've raised your request for an electricity meter at Yippin Creek 2444 with ESSENTIAL the service provider for your area.

Your service order number is Keep it handy in case you need to talk to us about the work.


What's next?

ACUMEN will install your meter within 2 business days and, after the work is done, we'll add the \$0 installation charge to your next bill . Just make sure there's clear and safe access to the property...."

We contacted Origin after this email was forwarded to us by our customer stating that we cannot install meters for no charge. The email from Origin is misleading our customers suggesting that there will be no charge. We must invoice our customer for services rendered.

This is **not fair competition** in a commercial market. Particularly when in a number of instances work obtained by us and thus business for Origin as the retailer/biller only for that work to be given to another meter installer who has a reciprocal arrangement with Origin.

5. Loss of consumer choice as before they could use any retailer now they are forced to choose Origin if we are to do the work for them.
6. Increased consumer costs as the increased construction costs are passed on.
7. Currently - lack of corporate knowledge regarding meter installation across the retailer and meter provider sector.
8. Meter numbers have no uniformity.



9. Numerous platforms:

- Require details updating;
- Multiple accreditations;
- Ongoing multiple updates and changes;
- Varied terminology and acronym usage;
- Lodging CCEW with network, NSW Fair Trading, Retailer and Meter provider where previously only the network required notification; and,
- Significant increase in administrative workload.

10. There appears to be a lack of transparency regarding the need for the conversion to smart meters. We are told that the benefits include customer ability to monitor usage via apps and the resolution of access issues for meter readings. We speculate that the drivers include things such as the capacity to be more creative in billing based on usage patterns.

11. If the move to smart meters is justified then surely introducing this through the service networks with corporate knowledge of installation and process the move would have been less fraught with the numerous issues, delays and costs currently being experienced across the construction sector. The monopolies that have been created by the movement of this process to retailers and meter providers could have been largely avoided.

Please contact us if further clarification is required in relation to any of these points.

Yours faithfully



Sally Drinkwater.
Manager