

To Whom May Concern,

I am a Level 2 Service Provider currently working within the Sydney Metropolitan Area.

Since the commencement of the "Power of Choice" legislation (POCL) permitting the retail companies to arrange for the installation of meters, the entire process has become an absolute debacle to say the least. What was once an easy process which entailed liaising with the network distributors (eg Ausgrid/Endeavour), collecting the meters at a local depot and installing them, has now become an expensive and time consuming job wherein the customer is now worse off.

Prior to POCL the customer had a choice as to who would install their meters. They were able to contact a Level 2 Service Provider who would liaise with the network distributor and then could attend with the meters and install them and complete any associated wiring that needed to be done at the same time. This was a process that took no more than a week.

Now, for a new installation we have to liaise firstly with the network distributor, then contact the customer to open a retail account. The retailer then requires a form to be completed by the customer, which form actually needs to be completed by an electrician. It is then emailed to the retailer who then have to validate the information on the form. Once this has occurred, they then have to contact the customer to obtain approval and once approved the retailer then liaises again with the network distributor who then has to issue a job number to us. Furthermore the network distributor then has to contact the retailer and the retailer then issues a work order to the meter provider who then has to actually contact the installer to arrange for the work to be carried out.

Most retailers in which I have dealt with are taking an excessive amount of time just to validate the form. When I say validate, they simply have to check to ensure the address and NMI are correct. For example: On 9 May 2018 I forwarded a Service Works Request Form to Energy Australia. They emailed me to confirm receipt of the Service Works Request Form. On 4 June 2018 I contacted them to obtain a status update. I was informed that the Service Works Request Form was still waiting to be validated. Approximately a month had passed and nothing had been done. This is just one example, I have had many jobs in which I have submitted the paperwork and action has not been taken.

This process has to change. Customers should not have to wait for months until the retailers process their paperwork. I have had many discussions with various staff members of a large number of retail companies, in all circumstances they have informed me that they are under staffed and advised there is nothing they can do about it. On many occasions I have contacted retailers including Origin and Energy Australia and AGL and have had to wait approximately 1 hour on hold until they attended to my call.

Furthermore, The retailers are using their own meter providers (for example Origin uses Acumen) so although customers complete applications requesting a certain meter provider, this is usually ignored.

The retailers must not be allowed to be in control of metering that they have a vested interest in. They are dictating to all the small contractors who are trying to make a living, where and when they can do their work which is impossible for a contractor to run their business.

Further, the communication between the retailers, meter providers, contractors and meter installers is appalling to say the least. What was once an automated system between the retailer and network distributors now seems to require every department to manually check the forms inform the retailers/meter providers/contractors/meter installers which simply is not happening. On numerous occasions I have contacted the retailer who have advised that a work order has been issued to the meter provider however when contacting the meter provider they have informed they are yet to receive the work order etc etc. On many occasions we seem to be "chasing our tail" trying to assist our customers to get power as soon as possible.

Finally, and most importantly, the meters are being installed by people that have very minimal training and I believe that someone will be seriously injured or killed unless changes are made. They have installers coming from other states that don't even hold a NSW electrical licence installing meters, does this seem like a safe work practice to you?

I think there has to be an independent body that oversees and issues the metering to contractors. We shouldn't be held to ransom by greedy retail companies that, at the moment, seem to be able to do whatever they want as there are no timeframes that they need to abide by. They are doing whatever suits them.

I seriously hope that you listen to the large number of contractors who have lost a good part of their work as a result of the POCL and are really struggling to cope with it.

These are just some of the problems with this system and I would be only too happy to sit down with the Member of Parliament to discuss it further.

David Sloane
Director

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