

## Retailers' meter installation practices in NSW



## NECA submission to IPART consultation

## Contents

<b>About NECA</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Foreword</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Feedback sought by IPART</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Timeframes.....	5
How many times providers have had to visit a property to complete an installation, and the reasons for multiple visits where they have occurred .....	7
Costs incurred by customers .....	8
Communication and service provided.....	8
Unexpected issues arising .....	9
<b>Suggested remedies advocated by NECA</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Appendix: testimonials from NECA members</b> .....	<b>11</b>

## About NECA

The National Electrical and Communications Association (NECA) is the peak industry body for Australia's electrical and communications contracting industry, which employs more than 145,000 workers and delivers an annual turnover in excess of \$23 billion. We represent over 5,000 electrical contracting businesses across Australia.

NECA represents the electrical and communications contracting industry across all states and territories. As a result of NECA's bi-annual industry survey, we are aware that NSW is the chosen headquartered state for many of the larger electrical contractors, making NSW issues critical for our members and the industry at large.

NECA aims to help our members and the wider industry to operate and manage their business more effectively and efficiently. To this end, NECA NSW owns and operates a Group Training Organisation, Registered Training Organisation, and its own Law Firm which all provide valued and industry focussed services to our members.

NECA represents members' interests to Federal and State Governments, regulators and principal industry bodies such as the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and Standards Australia.



## Foreword

As electrical contractors, many of NECA's members are intimately involved in – and impacted by – the roll-out of smart meters in NSW.

Prior to December 2017, metering in NSW was the sole preserve of the three electricity distributors (Ausgrid, Endeavour and Essential) who authorised accredited service providers (ASP) to undertake metering work on their networks.

The situation is now much changed, with 30 to 40 electricity retailers and several metering coordinators in this space, each with their own processes. It appears many of these organisations were unprepared to enter the NSW metering market, which has significant differences compared to other states and territories, for example the ASP Scheme is unique to NSW.

An appreciation of the complexities of this new environment is necessary in order to understand the difficulties and frustrations currently being experienced by consumers.

Oftentimes our members have been the “meat in the sandwich” caught between consumers, who cannot understand the cause of the delays experienced by many of them in having smart meters installed, and retailers and /or metering coordinators.

As such, NECA believes that we have the ability to provide valuable input to IPART on the metering installation practices of the retailers, which have been partly responsible for the endemic delays experienced by consumers during the roll-out of smart meters in NSW.

To this end, this submission contains analysis and real world testimonials from NECA members who have experienced these problems first hand, contained in the Appendix.

Ultimately, any improvement in the interactions between retailers, metering coordinators and the NECA members who undertake metering work will improve the experience of the end consumer.

We thank IPART for the opportunity to participate in this consultation process.

NECA has consistently advocated with respect to many of the issues canvassed as part of this consultation, which reflect the wealth of expertise of our members.

Should you wish to discuss further, I can be contacted on ph: [REDACTED] or email:

[REDACTED]

Yours faithfully



Suresh Manickam

**Chief Executive Officer  
NECA (National Electrical and Communications Association)**

## Feedback sought by IPART

NECA's response to each of the key topics for feedback sought by IPART is as follows.

### **Timeframes**

It is no exaggeration to state that many customers in NSW are waiting months to have new smart meters installed.

For example, the NECA member who sent in Correspondence #2 at the Appendix to this document states that under the previous regime, as a Level 2 ASP they could order a meter and have it installed within a matter of 1-3 days, however this has currently blown out to a minimum of 9 weeks.

This is obviously having a very significant impact on consumer convenience, costs and safety.

In some cases, particularly in regional and remote areas, they are unable to have new meters installed at all. An ASP from Parkes advised at a NECA forum held on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2018 that not one single smart meter had been installed in Parkes up until that date.

### Safety risks involved

Not only does this cause serious inconvenience to consumers, including preventing them from, for example properly utilising their solar / home battery systems, it also poses serious safety risks. These include:

- In some cases electrical contractors are required to connect to the power while bypassing the meter, for example when a lightning strike destroys a meter in a rural area and the farmer whose property it is located on cannot wait very long as they need the power for irrigation pumps; and
- Developers are connecting to power bypassing meter boards by using generators connected to the mains, in order to keep their construction projects from falling behind schedule.

In relation to the circumventing of the switchboard necessitated by the unavailability of the smart meters, this results in the safety switches, which are designed to prevent an electric shock, being unable to fulfil this role.

A safety switch will automatically shut off the electricity when current is detected leaking from faulty switches, wiring or appliances. This stops the current flowing to earth through a person and electrocuting them.

If the safety board is bypassed, then the risk of electric shock is therefore higher.

It is also unclear how electricity charges would be calculated in these circumstances.

### Lack of installers due to punitive training costs

In some geographical areas, the very low volume of meter installation work means that it is not economic for electricians to undertake the metering coordinator's training to enable them to become accredited to conduct meter installations on behalf of that coordinator.

The metering coordinator's training might involve the electrician travelling to a metropolitan area and staying overnight, thus incurring travel costs and time off the job.

If there are only a handful of meters to be installed in the area, the electrician would actually lose money by becoming accredited, as the small profit per meter installed would not cover the costs of becoming accredited in the first place.

#### Lack of standardisation of metering training

A related issue is that the metering coordinators do not recognise each other's training for metering installation work. This means that electricians employed as installers would have to undertake multiple similar safety courses in order to have a good geographic coverage of the state.

This is highly problematic given the large number of metering coordinators now operating in NSW. Moreover, in the one apartment block there may be a significant number of retailers and therefore metering coordinators whose training electrical contractors must qualify under if they are to install smart meters for the entire block.

Under the previous regime in NSW, metering was the responsibility of Distributors, who authorised accredited service providers (ASP) to undertake metering work on their networks under the ASP Scheme. With only three Distributors in NSW in distinct geographic areas, it was much easier for installers to qualify for work in the area their business is located in.

With few electricians incentivised to become accredited to metering coordinators in some parts of the state, there is a resulting shortage of installers and this has led to delays in consumers having their meters installed.

Apparently this issue is even affecting government departments in regional areas, who have experienced delays themselves in having smart meters installed.

#### Infrequent training courses, charged to the contractor

NECA has been advised that in some areas the training courses metering coordinators are requiring installers to attend to become accredited are infrequent and as a result are overbooked.

Moreover, in some regional areas that there is a significant cost to the contractor to attend these courses, and doing so only allows them to install meters on behalf of one retailer. This means in many cases that the contractor will therefore have to try and convince their client (the consumer) to change their retail contract to best suit the training they have completed to receive any benefit at all.

#### Need for mutual recognition

In order to address this issue, NECA has advocated that a system of mutual recognition of training be established for metering coordinators.

This is particularly the case since there are only two manufacturers of smart meters used in NSW.

Hopefully the development of new metering installation rules, which provide clarity regarding the requirements for the training of metering installers, will be of assistance in streamlining the

training required by the metering coordinators of the electricians undertaking installation work on their behalf.

#### Availability of smart meters

There have been widespread reports from NECA's ASP members that they have considerable difficulties in sourcing smart meters to install for clients.

This has resulted in considerable frustration and complaints from clients.

Previously, metering was the preserve of the electricity distributors (Ausgrid, Endeavour and Essential) who provided meters to ASPs as a matter of course.

There are now 30 to 40 retailers and several metering coordinators in this space, each with their own processes. Many of these organisations were unprepared to enter the NSW metering market, which has significant differences compared to other states and territories, with the contestable works markets and ASPs unique to NSW.

#### Low pay rates deterring electricians from becoming metering installers

The unrealistically low rates of pay initially offered by metering coordinators (around \$65 per meter installed) were also instrumental in deterring electrical contractors from undertaking installation work. This resulted in a lack of installers which contributed to delays.

To an extent this situation is remedying itself, as metering coordinators have had to offer considerably higher pay rates per meter in order to attract sufficient metering installers.

### **How many times providers have had to visit a property to complete an installation, and the reasons for multiple visits where they have occurred**

#### Presence of faulty electrical work

One of the most pressing issues currently involving the smart meter roll-out in NSW is that when installers attend a premises to install a smart meter, often they find that there is faulty electrical work present.

According to the conditions of their electrical licences, installers are required to undertake remedial work in cases where they find significantly faulty electrical work.

However, meter installers are paid by metering coordinators at a fixed rate per meter. As such, there are no funds available to cover the cost of this remedial work.

In these cases, meter installers are often walking away from the job.

NECA has raised the possibility that, in these cases, the retailer should make a call on what happens to the installation. The retailer's options would include whether they advise the consumer that they will have to pay for the remedial work prior to the installation of the smart meter occurring.

It would also be beneficial for retailers and metering coordinators to address these issues of faulty electrical work in a consistent fashion.

#### Coordination between metering installers and electrical contractors

In cases where the installation of a smart meter is more involved than just a basic installation, the involvement of a meter installer (licensed electrician) and an electrical contractor (with a higher level of training and expertise) must be coordinated.

Previously, an ASP would have sufficient expertise to undertake all installations by themselves, given their higher level of training and expertise compared to the meter installer.

#### Switchboard upgrades for multi-dwelling apartment blocks

Some NECA members are reporting that they find it very difficult to carry out switchboard upgrades for multi-dwelling apartment blocks. Under the previous metering regime, the electrical contractor would lodge the relevant applications with the Distributor (Ausgrid, Endeavour or Essential) and would then collect the meters and install them on the designated change over day.

The problem now is that it extremely difficult for the electrical contractor to arrange multiple metering providers to attend on the same day when they are replacing the main switchboard. As the electrical contractor cannot leave the apartments unmetered they are therefore forced to either:

1. Submit all applications to the individual providers and book in one metering provider for the designated change over day; or
2. Re-install the old disc meters for the remainder of the apartments until the additional metering providers attend to replace the meters.

This is an issue as it is not permitted under the Service Installation Rules and the electrical contractor therefore risks being issued with a defect notice by the Distributor for re-using the old meters.

### **Costs incurred by customers**

#### “Data transfer fees”

NECA has heard anecdotally that in some cases once a customer has had a smart meter installed by a retailer, that the retailer is then charging up to \$3,000 to customers wishing to change retailers. Apparently this is being termed a “data transfer fee”.

#### Lack of / ambiguity of information provided to consumers at the meter

NECA has been advised by our members that the way in which metering providers are programming the meters is providing relatively little information to consumers, with the information that is provided being ambiguous.

Moreover, we are advised that metering coordinators are programming the meters in an inconsistent fashion, despite the fact that there are only a couple of meter types being used. This is also likely to confuse consumers and thus makes it more difficult for consumers to query the bills provided to them by retailers.

### **Communication and service provided**

In the experience of NECA members, there is a lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of the retailers, metering coordinators and distributors of their respective roles and obligations under the new regime.



This is attested by the testimonials contained at the Appendix of this document, which have been provided by NECA members.

Some of the specific issues with regards to retailers from the perspective of our members are as follows.

#### Difficulties in raising an NMI number

Electrical contractors often have difficulties in having NMI numbers allocated by retailers to undertake installations, both in terms of the timeframes for having them allocated and also the requirements of the process itself.

Correspondence #4 provides an account of the difficulties experienced by one of NECA's members in this regard.

#### Advice provider by retailers to consumers

From the perspective of consumers themselves, NECA would draw IPART's attention to the evidence collected by Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC).

In a presentation to the Energy Consumers Australia Foresighting Forum, 2018 Craig Memery from PIAC stated that in their "mystery shopper" exercise, multiple phone calls were made to two dozen retailers, when consumers asked if they could have smart meter installed, the most common answer was that they didn't offer smart meters. The second most common answer was to refer the customer to their local distribution network operator (despite networks being no longer allowed to install smart meters under the AEMC metering contestability framework). The third most common answer was; yes they could install a smart meter; however, only half of retailers could install it within the next six months.

### **Unexpected issues arising**

#### Changing meters when changing retailers

NECA has been advised that in some cases when a consumer changes their electricity retailer the metering provider changes over the smart meter, given that the smart meter remains the property of the original retailer.

Previously, the meter was and remained the property of the electricity distributor. As a result this issue did not arise.

#### Coordination of jobs in regional areas

NECA members have advised that they are experiencing difficulties in relation to the coordination of metering jobs in regional areas, with little appreciation of the travel times and distances involved.

## Suggested remedies advocated by NECA

NECA advocates that there is a clear need for better communication and coordination between retailers, metering coordinators and electricity distributors with respect to metering in NSW.

This would potentially be of great assistance to our members who are involved in metering and would ultimately assist consumers.

To this end, we advocate that the following measures should be considered:

- A centralised repository of connection dates should be developed. This should be kept updated by distributors and provided to retailers and electrical contractors;
- Electrical contractors being able to access a centralised repository of smart meters, in order to help address the difficulties in securing meters;
- Clarification should be provided by regulators that, in cases where significantly defective electrical work is discovered during a meter installation job, the retailer should make a call on what happens to the installation. The retailer's options would include whether they advise the consumer that they will have to pay for the remedial work prior to the installation of the smart meter occurring;
- A generic flowchart being produced and available for electrical contractors to assist understanding of what the entire process is and which party is responsible for what;
- Reviewing the current legislative to see whether there are any barriers to electrical contractors installing meters directly on behalf of clients, at least under certain circumstances;
- Retailers to establish a process to allow for off-supply emergency calls to be received and responded to immediately; and
- Retailers to provide email confirmation to electricians once a metering coordinator has been appointed for any metering works.

## Appendix: testimonials from NECA members

The following correspondence was received from NECA members who have been involved in the roll-out of smart meters in NSW. It has not been edited in any way except for spelling, punctuation and formatting. All of the senders of the correspondence have given their permission for it to be used in NECA's advocacy efforts on their behalf.

They would all be happy to hear from IPART to explain the circumstances outlined below further, should IPART consider that this would be of assistance.

### **Correspondence #1: lack of communication between retailers, meter providers and distributors leading to delays in meter installations**

Hi Adam

In regards to your NECA news letter dated 16 April 2018, I would like to raise a few issues we are experiencing with the new smart meter installations for new sites.

1) To start the process we have two options, either we as the electrician or the customer is required to obtain a NMI from a retailer. This initial part of the process has not changed but the problems we are finding is:

- Explaining the process to the client
- If the new site is not registered we are finding it almost impossible to obtain a NMI therefore we cannot start the process, this becomes a problem down the track when we are out of time because the rest of the process takes so long.

2) We submit an application for connection to Essential Energy and wait for an approval number to come back. This comes back as approved or needing level 1 & 3 works (if level 1 or 3 works are required this can take months). This again has not changed.

3) In the past we would order a meter from Essential Energy and have it in the system awaiting appropriate construction time for connection to the premises.

- With the new system we have no control nor anybody to contact for support in regards to meter supply, we are forced to wait until a meter provider contacts us to advise they have a meter to install at our job. To get to this stage it is either taking a long time or due to us starting the process early we are receiving calls for meter installation way in advance to when the site is actually ready for connection, therefore us having to reschedule the connection date. Once paperwork is submitted there is no way of following up, which leaves us and the client wondering (for weeks/months) if it is going to happen.

4) We are currently accredited with Acumen who is the meter provider for Origin. We recently had a job requiring CT metering, after speaking to Acumen they said nothing had changed for CT metering and for us to submit an application for CT metering to Essential Energy. Essential Energy came back to us advising they do not do CT Metering anymore

and that we need to contact our retailer, whereas Origin advises that we are to contact a meter provider. After the entire day on the phone and several emails, I received an application form to submit to Origin. This has been submitted although to date we have had no return correspondence in regards to the process or where this is up to.

Our experience has only been with Origin and AGL. The feedback we are receiving from Level 2 contractors in our area is that it is very difficult and people are waiting a long time to have power connected and even stories of sites having to operate with generator power until they can have power connected through the new system.

It is our opinion that there seems to be a lack of communication and knowledge between retailers, meter providers and Essential Energy, while ever this continues it will be very difficult to obtain accurate information and job status.  
Please contact me if I can help with any more information.

Regards  
Wayne

Wayne Smith | **Service Manager**  
**Laser Electrical Coffs Harbour**

**Address:** [REDACTED]

**Phone:** [REDACTED]

**Mobile:** [REDACTED]

## **Correspondence #2: examples of meter installation delays caused by the processes of electricity retailers**

Dear Adam

I am writing to you at NECA to express disappointment from myself & many other contractors in the industry with the new metering rules that have been brought in & the removal of ASPs from being able to install metering. Previously, as a Level 2 ASP I could order a meter & have it installed much to my customers satisfaction within a matter of 1-3 days but as you will read below of my recent experiences with Energy Australia it is now taking a minimum of 9 weeks for the same work to be done. I have held my ASP accreditation since 1995 as have many others & it is disappointing that a government department with no experience in the industry has taken something that has worked very well & ruined the scheme & made a contractor's job much harder, and the customer experience appalling. The rule changes should never have given the retailers the power they now have and customer service is non-existent.

Since the changes were introduced, I have ordered metering installed through Energy Australia, and on each occasion, I am told it will take between 3-4 weeks, however that is not even close to the timeframe that has eventuated. When following up on an order today with Energy Australia, the customer service operator on the phone admitted that they are unable to keep up with the demand due to a lack of contractors, yet they offer to pay peanuts to have contractors do the work, so very few ASPs that I have spoken to are interested in installing metering for retailers. To illustrate my experience over the past 3 months, here are a number of examples of what the changes have resulted in:

### Example 1 –

I had a customer in a café that required an urgent metering job to replace a single phase meter & upgrade to three phase. The customer was blowing the supply on a daily basis & had to run extension leads from another business through their doors to be able to trade properly. (Very unsafe for employees but it was that or close the business until the meter could be installed)

I lodged the paperwork with Energy Australia on 15-1-18 & was told it would take 'about three weeks'. A follow-up email was sent on 28-1-18 with no reply. The job was finally done on 20-3-18 - yes nine weeks after asking for a meter. They were hard to organise times as we were first told between 11am & 1pm then told about 4pm before the contractor called with 30 minutes notice & came at 12:30pm. This makes it impossible to be able to plan the job as we have to be onsite to finish the job. The meter installer can only do certain parts of the job and we, as the electrical contractor have to do the rest, so we must be able to coordinate being onsite together.

### Example 2-

A job to have a meter replaced for an existing house & install a meter for a new downstairs flat. Again, I was told between 3 & 4 weeks. I lodged the paperwork on 9-2-18. A follow-up phone call was made six weeks after this on 23-3-18. Firstly, I was put on hold for 35 minutes, then I was told they were sorry and they had not even called the customer yet & basically 'too bad' they will have to just wait. I sent an email on the 25-3-18 explaining that the tenant had now moved out & both meters were to be put in the owner's name. Today on 9-4-18 I called & started the conversation by asking how long a new meter should take after it is ordered, and the reply was "about 3-4 weeks". Then I asked why I had waited two months with still no date of installation. The customer service officer said that on 6-4-18 they had tried to call the customer (clearly, they had not even looked at the email that had been

sent regarding who to contact after the tenants had moved out, as they were still trying to call the old tenant). I was then told that she would try & get it sorted, which would take at least another 3-4 weeks. This means that if the job ever happens, I (and the customer) will have waited 3 months for a simple metering job to happen.

Example 3 –

I am wiring a new house for a customer that required the single-phase builder's supply to be removed & a three-phase meter installed. I have sent the paperwork to Energy Australia on 14-3-18 & as of today have not received any information about scheduling the installation.

Andrew, perhaps you could ask the Minister if he spent \$1 million on a new house build if he would be happy to wait till after the builders had finished, for who knows how long, before it had power for his new house & solar working correctly.

The new scheme is clearly not working & has been poorly planned from day 1. The ASPs should still be able to install metering without the meter supply restraints, the dates stipulated by the retailers etc as it was working perfectly well for the last 20 years. Who are the new metering companies - they seem to have found a nice business in a government scheme where the big businesses make all the profit & the small businesses & customers suffer.

NECA should be calling the Minister to account as he is responsible for these changes that will destroy many businesses & make the lives of small contractors harder, not to mention a major step backwards for customers.

Could you please respond with what actions NECA is taking to represent its members that are suffering under the new scheme and whether it will bring the media's attention to the failure of the change, leading to customers waiting for months for a meter instead of 1-2 days.

With thanks

Kent Donnelly  
KMD Electrical Pty Ltd  
0419460042  
[kent@kmdelectrical.com.au](mailto:kent@kmdelectrical.com.au)

### **Correspondence #3: delays caused by miscommunication between retailer and metering coordinator**

Complaint: Length of time to get meter

- Submitted request for meter from Acumen (Origin Provider) on the 05/03/2018.
- We continually contacted Acumen. They kept saying they were waiting for Origin to hand the job to them. They then said it had been given to Vector (don't know why this happened as it was an Ad's and Alt's job not a new connection).
- Then started contacting Origin directly on 29th of March and was on the phone for 2 hours and 45 mins they advised they would cancel it with vector and hand it to Acumen. Called Origin 2 weeks later and was on the phone for over an hour and all they could say was it should come to Acumen (and in turn to me) soon.
- Still no result as at 16th April 2018
- In summary it has been 6 weeks and still waiting with the customer threatening to take myself and the solar installer to court for over \$6000 in damages for lost solar production

Peter Hibbard  
0488 69 47 45  
hibbardelectrics.com.au

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**Correspondence #4: builder experiencing delays due to lack of coordination between retailer, metering coordinator and distributor**

To All,

We have tried to have a meter installed to our property at Smith Street Forest Hill since the 20/12/2017. Below is the time line.

- 1/ 20/12/2017. Application for a NMI number and New account. (Heaps of stuff to go through.)
- 2/ 22/12/2017. Origin new connections raised request for a meter with Essential and Vector and would be done in 12 business days.
- 3/ 23/12/2018 Rang Origin to say access was Ok but if the person didn't like dogs they need to make a time to fit the meter.
- 4/ 3/1/2018 From Origin I received a snapshot of how the new connection was going with only the NMI number is complete and fitting yet to be scheduled.
- 5/ 16/1/2018 From Essential Energy connection alteration successfully submitted etc.
- 6/ 1/2/2018 Told by Origin that Vector would install meter on the 5/2/2018 at 7.30 – 8.30 in the morning to which I waited till 10.30 for them for a no show only to get an email saying that Vector could not contact me and will be scheduled when they can contact me. (I said this was BS and thanks for wasting my time.)
- 7/ 7/2/2018 Origin said they have forward my name and number to Vector the meter provider and said they would let me know when they have an update from them. I thought I would wait and see what service we would get and it is now the 16/4/2018 and still waiting. (Maybe they charge too much not to do the job.)

This is not the power of choice.

The previous system was a good system why "F" with it!

Regards,  
Ted Van Lierop.  
T.J & D.J Van Lierop Builders.  
(02) 6926 5020  
[ted.deb.van@bigpond.com](mailto:ted.deb.van@bigpond.com)



## **Correspondence #5: delays caused at hospital due to retailer**

Origin Energy

New connections emailed me forms to fill out for CT Metering on Wed 28<sup>th</sup> Feb, I filled them out and replied to the email on Wed 28<sup>th</sup> Feb for Tumbarumba.

Rang to follow it up on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> March they said they couldn't find the request to email it again. The guy I spoke with got it but couldn't do it as he wasn't trained in CT requests. Would get someone to call me that day.

Got no call, rang again 7<sup>th</sup> March was on hold for 48mins before I spoke with anyone. He could see the email but said it hadn't been processed. Told me that CT people were extremely busy and someone would try call me within 24-48 hours.

Richard Crookes sent a request for NMI for Wagga Hospital – it was rejected as there is another meter already on that premises, no one was told it was rejected I only found out when I rang 2 weeks later to find out where it was up to. Once again the guy I spoke with couldn't do anything as he was only trained in status updates. Would request a case manager and get someone to call me within 24-48hrs

Regards,

Matt De Marco  
RIC Electrics Pty Ltd ABN 29 061 744 581  
P.O. Box 2049 (6 Nesbitt Street)  
WAGGA WAGGA NSW 2650  
Phone: 02 6926 9000  
Fax: 02 6926 9001  
Mobile: 0427 328 720  
Email: [mdemarco@ric.com.au](mailto:mdemarco@ric.com.au)  
Visit us online at [www.ric.com.au](http://www.ric.com.au)

## **Correspondence #6: letter to Member of Parliament regarding misrepresentations to ASP level 2s by electricity retailers**

Adam, this is a version of a letter I sent to my local state member regarding a couple of experiences that we had last November.

Hi Thomas.

I am writing to bring to your attention what has happened to us Level 2 Authorised Contractors here in the Lismore/ Tweed Area.

In October we were contacted by Acumen Metering and Activestream Metering. These are both metering suppliers/ installers for AGL and Origin Energy. They were running courses and signing up Level 2 electricians to do all of their metering installations. (Much the same as what we did before this Power of Choice legislation). The Acumen course set up by Origin was a 2 day course held in Alstonville, Activestream did their 1 day course in Ballina.

We were told by Accumen and Active Stream that these Energy Retailers were recruiting suitably qualified electricians (Level 2) to do their meter installs, that we would be able to supply our customers with metering and that this work was to be paid for by the end user or the customer.

*We were told that this was to be model into the future and that to continue providing metering services we needed to sign up.* Great, business as usual. We would still be able to offer our customers the complete electrical job from start to finish and that our profitability and business models were not going to be impacted. We invest many thousands of dollars every year in training, equipment, tools, insurance, vehicles and business software to ensure that our Level 2 Authorisation is current, that we meet the needs of our customers and also the standards required by the energy regulators and suppliers.

We were told during the training that these Metering Suppliers were set up by the Retailers and that they were part of the parent companies and if not part of the parent companies had been recently calved off and set up as individual companies.

We had to purchase new equipment, test gear, I- pads, install new software, update our OHS and WHS systems and PPE, do the required training and set ourselves up on the websites and portals provided by these Companies. All to be ready by the 1st of December. A lot of expenditure in administration and training and the purchase of hardware. All up costs around the \$4000 mark.

It is now apparent that we have been misled, or sold a dud by both AGL and Origin. They are not using Level 2 Contractors, they aren't using Acumen or Activestream and have instead engaged different Metering Services Providers altogether.

I have quoted metering installation jobs using the models given to us by Activestream and Acumen which have fallen through. Customers are complaining that we are trying to defraud them, charging for services that they have been told are supplied free of charge.

To verify this I contacted Origin pretending to be a customer and told them that I needed a meter alteration and that my Level 2 Electrician will be doing the metering and that there will be a charge applied by the electrician. They told me that no this is not right, they will supply and install the new metering free of charge. I asked who this was, got the contact number for a metering installer who was going to travel from Sydney to do the work.

The Tweed river Jockey Club is investing in a large solar generating system. The solar installers told me that the metering is provided free of charge by Origin. In my capacity as a Director of the TRJC, I contacted Origin to verify this and yes, this was the case.

Mark Cave, an Electrician here on the Tweed had to refund two of his customers who had pre-paid for work that was due to be completed this month. George Arronis was abused by a long term customer, accused that he was ripping them off when he told them what the fees and charges were to install metering.

There is not a lot that anybody can do about this and I am sure that this has occurred statewide. The Energy Retailers need to be held accountable for this debacle. All of the Level 2 guys I know are devastated, are angry and very disappointed. For what it is worth I am going to invoice Activestream and Acumen for my time and hopefully return all of the new gear that I purchased in November. Times are tough enough without being sold up the river by these Energy Retailers.

Bill Larkin

Larkin Electrical Pty Ltd  
12 Wharf St, P.O.Box 91 Murwillumbah NSW 2484  
p: 02 6672 1737, f: 02 6672 2411, m:0415299220.  
E: [admin@larkinelectrical.com.au](mailto:admin@larkinelectrical.com.au)  
NSW Lic 206213c, Qld Lic 73010, ACRS Lic A043935.  
[www.larkinelectrical.com.au](http://www.larkinelectrical.com.au)

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## **Correspondence #7: convoluted notification process between retailers, metering coordinators and installers**

Hi Oliver,

I know you guys are fighting the good fight on our behalf, but I just received this from Acumen Metering.

This is the kind of red tape bureaucratic nonsense that is making very basic and daily dealings difficult and challenging.

Metering was so much easier before December 2017. I fully endorse the use of smart meters, but it should have remained with the wholesalers (the same as the old metering model). Considering the retailers pretty much all use the same type of smart meter, it just seems clunky to have these extra stakeholders pulling the strings. As an ASP we are used to being at the bottom of the food chain in these dealings, but this is making running an electrical contracting firm more challenging than it really needs to be.

I'm sure you already know about it but thought I'd forward it on nevertheless.

Thanks for taking the time to read my email. Good luck with the ongoing pursuit of common-sense. I hope we have some resolution.

Bets regards;

Dylan Jorgenson  
Nowra NSW 2541  
T 02 44234686  
IJED Electric & Data

Dear Acumen Accredited Installer,

The national electricity law requires all electricity retailers, including Origin Energy, to notify customers with sufficient advance notice of the date and time of an interruption to their power supply for any additions & alterations meter installation. Breaching this law carries significant financial penalties to the retailer. The fact that you, as an Accredited Installer, have arranged a date and time with your customer is not sufficient under the law as it currently stands.

This is why Acumen's procedures for our Accredited Installers stipulates that you notify us of the planned date and time of a meter installation when lodging a meter request with us, and that you are only permitted to install a meter at this date and time. When you notify us of the planned date and time of the installation, we notify Origin, and Origin sends a letter to the customer to cover their legal obligation to notify the customer. If for whatever reason you have to reschedule an installation with the customer, you must notify us of the date/time with sufficient notice, we will re-notify Origin and Origin will again send a letter to the customer notifying them of the new date/time. In some cases we will notify you that we need for you to arrange a new date and time with the customer (say where Origin has insufficient time or information to send a letter to the customer), and again we require you to comply with only installing metering on this new date and time. If a request has come back from Origin later than expected, we will schedule the job for the earliest possible completion date. If this date

is not suitable, we ask that you give us a call and advise a date that works, noting that the date must be after the already supplied date.

**Where we find that an Accredited Installer has installed meter(s) in an adds & alts situation at a date/time that is different to that notified under this procedure, we may suspend that Accredited Installer from any future meter installations through us.**

I appreciate these rules as they stand may be a pain. However, the nature of the existing law means we have no choice but to comply with this procedure. We will continue to work with Origin to enable any improvements to this customer notification process.

Due to the above mentioned notification requirements, any Adds & Alts jobs that have been assigned and are now past the date specified have been removed from your Aculink. The job is not lost or cancelled, we have simply had to isolate it. A new Meter Requisition is NOT required, simply advise us of the job and the new date – must be no less than 10 business days, and we will arrange for the job to be re-issued to you and a new notification to be sent to the customer.

Thanks for your cooperation.

Regards,

**Scott Pope**

National Manager, Customer Service Delivery

**Acumen Metering**