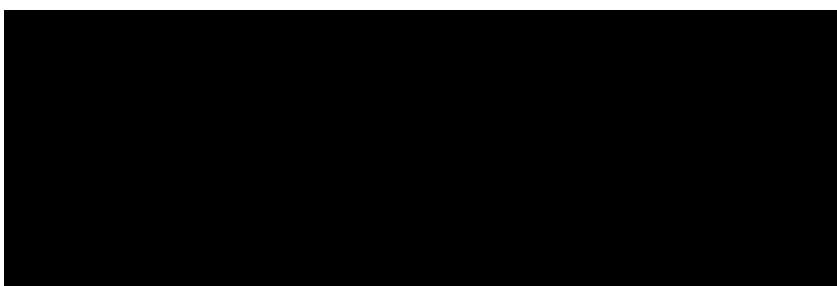


Author name: Anonymous

Date of submission: Wednesday, 20 June 2018

Submission: Please find attached our submission of some of the issues our customers and I have been facing since the introduction of POC. It has not been a easy road and it is not getting easier for anyone.




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**20/6/18**

IPART  
Review of Electricity Retailers Practices  
Department of Planning & Services – ASP Scheme

**Dear IPART:**

I take this opportunity to inform you of our experiences under the ‘Power of Choice’ (POC) arrangements that came into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2017– our company  having been a Service Provider No 2 since 2006 and worked in the electricity industry many years prior to this.

To sum up our experience to date: POC has created utter mayhem. When something goes wrong with a job the MPB’s call centres have no idea why and it is the customer who is left waiting. Given the industry knew the change was coming they were and continue to be completely unprepared for the requirements of ‘Power of Choice’ and it is the customer who is left waiting and the meter installer having to jump through many hoops in order to get a simple meter install done.

A simple process that would once take our company about a week has now for some of our jobs taken over two months. Some retailers processes are getting better but I can safely say for the majority of jobs multiple phone calls by us and the customer need to be made to the retailer in order to get the job done. When you have 10-20 jobs going at the one time this process becomes unmanageable.

Under POC we had to become authorised with a Meter Provider (MPB) in order to be allowed to install their meters. Some MPB’s required 1 day of training, others a one week course and various fees in order to become authorised. There is no consistency around the authorisation process which makes it difficult, time consuming and tedious to become authorised with more than 3 MPB’s. As such our company is authorised with only two.

Once authorised each MPB has their own online systems you have to learn to use. They also have different installation processes, different meters types and different paperwork submission requirements to name a few of the issues we have encountered. As such my review of the POC changes could run over pages so I have listed the main issues in bullet point form that we have encountered since 1 December 2017.

Issues;

- **Losing jobs we lodge:** We lodge what’s called a work order request (which gives us permission from the retailer to install a meter). Once the job is ready the MPB gives the job to someone else (usually their bulk meter installers). We spend the time and effort to lodge the job and then we lose it, in some cases the customer refuses to pay us as they say we did not do any work. Have made complaints to the MPB – nothing has changed.

- **Customers left waiting over 2 months for meter install:** Same scenario as above except the switchboard is not energised as we energise the switchboard at the same time as we install the meter. However the MPB sends their sub-contractor to install the meter but they cannot. The customer then complains to the MPB who then contacts us. The job now needs to be re-routed to us (since we lodged the application) this can take anywhere up to a month and the customer has already been waiting for over a month.
- **Exact date of meter install required 1 month in advance:** When lodging a work order request with some retailers you must specify the exact date of installation – 1 month in advance – and you are not allowed to install the meter on any other day or you can become de-registered with that MPB. If you cannot install the meter on that day you must contact the MPB again to organise another day for installation a minimum of 2 weeks into the future. We have written emails to the MPB advising the ridiculous nature of this process given the nature of the electrical industry ie weather, delays in construction, customer changes mind/retailer etc no response was ever received to the issues raised.
- **Numerous meter types now exist in the market:** Each MPB has their own type of meters and you must learn the programming and installation methods of each, making the job more confusing and increasing the chance of error in installation further.
- **Customer accounts opened in our business name to get a job processed on time:** We were chasing up the status of two outstanding jobs for our customers (they had been waiting approximately 3 weeks at this point) only to be told we could go ahead with the job because the accounts had been opened under our business name – not the customers – to expediate the process. We advised the call centre that we did not give authority for the accounts to be opened in our name and they needed to cancel the job and start the process again. The call centre (who was located offshore) did not understand that what they had done was illegal and un-authorized. The call centre wanted to know ‘Why we were willing to let the customer wait a further 2 weeks’ for what they said ‘Would be a simple name change once the meter was installed.’ I advised them that by setting up the accounts in our name, instead of the customers, we were liable for the customers electricity bills, until and if, the customer decided to move the account to their name. They still did not understand the seriousness of what they had done. I then had to contact the head of Business Development in NSW in order to get this issue resolved – it took about 6 weeks to get the meter installed for these jobs.
- **Unrequested jobs/meters being sent through:** We have had jobs we know nothing about/ did not lodge, sent to us for work to be carried out in a different state of Australia (we are only authorised in NSW). We have had meters delivered to us that we never ordered for customers we do not know and the retailer has to this day still not collected the meter from us.
- **Customers given incorrect and unrealistic information about their meter install:** Customers are given a different number to call for enquiries about their meter install to the meter installers. Often this number is a call centre located overseas where they do not understand the Australian metering rules and give customers a scripted message of what is happening with their meter installation which differs greatly from reality. ie Many customer whose business we have lost have been told that the meter installation including installation of pole, wiring, cabling etc is free( a job that would cost about \$1600). Other customers have been told that the meter installer has your meter ready for installation, when we in fact had not received the work order giving us permission to install the meter. Yet another customer was told the meter is ready for pickup by your meter installer the delay is not on our part it is the meter installer. In actual fact for this MPB we are not allowed to pick up meters, we have to wait for them to be delivered from Queensland.
- **Unable to carry out certain types of jobs anymore:** We have turned away many jobs like upgrading switchboards for multi-occupancy dwellings because the switchboard contains multiple meters from many retailers and trying to co-ordinate the MPB’s to change over the meters on one day is impossible. We cannot touch meters for companies with which we are not authorised and cannot do the upgrade and leave a customer without power so we choose to forfeit the job.

