



30th March 2007

Uniting Aid

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Paul Kelly
ECCC Chairman
Level 6, Governor Stirling Tower
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Mr. Kelly,

Submission

Review of the Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers

This submission is made by Uniting Aid as an interested party in issues that affect vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers.

Uniting Aid has operated since 1981. It was established by the Dianella and Yokine Uniting Church congregation to provide emergency relief in the form of financial and food support to people who are on low incomes and residents within the City of Stirling. It is an agency of Uniting Care, the community service arm of the Uniting Church of Australia [WA]. It is directed by its Board of local volunteers and has a paid part time coordinator.

Uniting Aid works closely with community workers and consumers in the City of Stirling and has an interest in, the grass roots knowledge of, issues affecting vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers.

Uniting Aid is a small community based organization that is completely dependent upon people's generosity. Whilst we do receive a small amount of government funding, this all goes towards the financial needs of people that are experiencing difficulties with life's day to day necessities. In terms of staff, we draw upon a pool of over 30 valued volunteers. There are many different ways that people contribute to the work of Uniting Aid. Some people give their money or time, others foodstuff, or cleaning, stacking shelves, taking calls or interviewing people.

We set out our response to the discussion points raised in Part 9 of the Draft Review Report as follows:

We do not support the expansion of the use of PPM's outside the TRRP and ARCPSP. We are concerned about the current operation and possible future expansion of PPM's over the following reasons:

- Absence of a safety net for financially vulnerable consumers
- Limited access to recharge facilities
- Health and safety issues
- Access to rebates such as the Supply Charge Rebate and Dependant Child Rebate. Given that these are currently subsidized each bill cycle, it is unclear how there will be deducted in the pre-payment meter system.
- No record keeping of disconnections
- Higher costs

Given that the installation of PPM's is largely a commercial decision on the part of the retailer, it is our opinion that consumers should not be charged under any circumstances for the installation, connection, disconnection, reconnection and/or return to standard meters.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact me on 93443840.

Yours Sincerely 

Ruth Pedler
Financial Counselor
Uniting Aid.