



Have your say

Possible changes to protections for electricity customers

The *Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers 2018* is currently being reviewed. The Code outlines the minimum protections that apply to Western Australian household and small business electricity customers. The Code is reviewed every two years by an independent committee to make sure it is still offering an appropriate level of protection for all customers.

The Electricity Code Consultative Committee has released a draft report that proposes changes to the Code.

The Committee is seeking information on the proposed changes and customer experiences with the Code. Your responses will help to make sure that consumer protections for small use electricity customers meet with the community's expectations.

Bills

Electricity bills contain around 30 different types of information, including information about energy usage.

- Which parts of a standard energy bill are useful?
- Which parts could be removed to make the bill clearer?
- Should retailers be allowed to give some information in different ways? For example, through PDF/online bills, electronic portals or mobile phone apps.

Disconnections

Electricity disconnection has a substantial impact on households and businesses.

- Should retailers only be allowed to disconnect customers when their debt reaches a certain level?
- Would \$300 be an appropriate amount for that level?

Family violence protections

The Committee proposes to include protections in the code for those affected by family violence, such as :

- Protecting customers' information, including from a joint account holder.
- Requiring all retailers to have a family violence policy, including training for staff.
- Establishing safe communication methods between the retailer and customer.
- Not requiring customers to repeat their story, or to provide evidence of violence in most circumstances.

Are these additions useful?

Are there other protections that should be included? For example, should retailers be prohibited from disconnecting customers affected by family violence for a set amount of time?



ELECTRICITY CODE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Payments and assistance

Residential customers experiencing financial hardship or payment difficulties have access to payment extensions and instalment plans.

- Should retailers have to make these options available to all residential electricity customers who ask for them?
- Are there any other assistance measures that should be included in the Code? For example, access to “bill smoothing”, where customers pay their bill in smaller, more frequent payments.

The Committee is also considering changes to the way instalment plans are managed, including allowing future bills to automatically “roll into” the instalment plan.

Right to protections

The Code’s protections provide a minimum safety net for customers. Some of the Code’s protections may currently be set aside by retailers and customers.

- Should retailers and customers continue to have flexibility to agree that some protections will not apply? This would allow changes like different billing periods or reducing the number of payment methods.
- When agreeing to set aside protections, should retailers be able to do so verbally and in writing, or only in writing?

Assessment

To access payment assistance, customers must be assessed by their retailers.

Retailers may also refer customers to a financial counsellor for a non-binding assessment. As many financial counsellors have waiting lists, referrals to financial counsellors often result in delays to the assessment process.

The Committee proposes requiring all retailers to conduct these assessments themselves.

This would shorten the time for assessments and prevent residential customers from having to make an appointment with a counsellor to access payment assistance.

Customers would still be able to make an appointment with a financial counsellor if they want to.

Are these changes useful?

Have your say

You are welcome to provide comments on any of the issues above, or anything raised in the draft report on the Code.

You can read the full report at www.erawa.com.au/eccc.

Submissions are due by **Friday, 29 January 2021**.

Submissions can be lodged via the Economic Regulation Authority’s online form: www.erawa.com.au/consultation or via publicsubmissions@erawa.com.au