



Minutes

Meeting Title: ERACCC meeting Wednesday 11 October 2023 - Minutes
Meeting Number: 03/2023
Date & Time: Wednesday, 11 October 2023 10:00am (AWST)
Location: Ken Michael Room, Level 4, 469 Wellington Street Perth and Online via Microsoft Teams
Attendees: Members

Noelli Bariacto	CCI WA
Linh Nguyen	Chamber of Minerals and Energy
Rowan Kelly	Consumer Credit Legal Service
Suresh Rajan	Independent advocate
Mamta Kocchar	Ethnic Communities Council
Melanie Every	Financial Counsellors' Association
Sheldon Mumby	Pastoralists & Graziers Association
Lindsay Duncan	Property Council of Australia (WA)
Kitty Prodonovich	RCCI WA
Tim Dymond	UnionsWA
Graham Hansen	WA Council of Social Service
John Hassell	WA Farmers Federation
Daniel Thomson	WA Local Government Association

ERA

Steve Edwell (Chair), Jenness Gardner (CEO), Sara O'Connor (Executive Director Regulation), Emmanuel Miti (Principal Analyst), Richelle Preisser (Principal Regulatory Officer), Emma Forrest (Assistant Director, Licensing and Customer Protection), Alison Oviden (Senior Regulatory Officer), Danielle Asarpota (Manager Strategic Communications), Clare Darragh (Communications and Website Administrator).

Observers

Penny Lipscombe	Consumer Protection (DMIRS)
Marcus Claridge	Energy and Water Ombudsman
Brent Savage	Energy Policy WA

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1. Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country by Steve Edwell, Chair ERA

The meeting opened at 10:00am.

Danielle Asarpota acknowledged Country.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the ERA's activities since the June meeting, including the settlement agreement reached following the Electricity Review Board's finding that Synergy had contravened the market rules, that required Synergy to pay \$30 million via bill credits to its residential customers.

2. Apologies

There were no apologies.

3. Minutes of meeting 02/2022 held on Wednesday, 21 June 2023

The Chair approved the minutes of Meeting 02/2023 as a formal record of those events.

4. Gas compendium: overview of stakeholder feedback

Presented by Richelle Preisser, Principal Regulatory Officer (Licensing and Customer Protection, Utility Services Regulation).

The Compendium of Gas Customer Licence Obligations regulates the conduct of retailers and distributors that supply gas to customers. The Compendium is reviewed and updated, following the ERA's review of the *Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers* which came into effect February 2023.

The ERA provided an overview of stakeholder submissions received in response to the draft decision, and noted that a stakeholder roundtable is planned for November.

ERACCC discussed the duration and basis for the disconnection moratorium, and provided feedback on the need for retailers to ensure data privacy in relation to family and domestic violence (FDV) protections. The ERA noted that the introduction of the FDV protections requires retailers to explain how they will manage the personal information collected from customers experiencing FDV. The FDV protections also limits the occasions and information that retailers can require from customers to demonstrate that they are experiencing FDV.

ERACCC provided options for how the ERA can best communicate the new protections to the community, including developing a toolkit to share with ERACCC member organisations, local governments and regional development commissions which have direct access to customers.

5. Annual retailer and distributors performance data reports

Presented by Emma Forrest, Assistant Director (Licensing and Customer Protection, Utility Services Regulation)

The ERA provided an overview of the upcoming data reports, which will include data on pre-paid meters, service standard payments and early qualitative data on retailers' implementation of FDV protections.

The ERA led a discussion on improving the data reports, including through collecting data on new indicators and presenting the data in different formats.

ERACCC members suggested:

- A breakdown of data by local government or regional area.
- Interactive software such as Datawrapper to enable stakeholders to manipulate data
- A breakdown of renting versus owner-occupying customers.

ERACCC members discussed privacy concerns about data disaggregation, particularly concerning FDV related data. While this is not an issue for large retailers Synergy and Horizon Power, if smaller retailers provide data in future this should be carefully considered. ERACCC members also discussed the challenges of defining “customer”, which may include perpetrators and victim/survivors of FDV. Given there is no requirement for callers to prove they are victims of FDV when requesting support, it will be assumed that data collected will relate to FDV victim/survivor customers.

6. Western Power’s progress implementing its fifth access arrangement (AA5) improvements to regional reliability, the network connection process and streetlighting

Presented by Emmanuel Miti, Principal Analyst (Electricity Access).The ERA explained that, unlike previous access arrangement, the ERA is taking a proactive approach to monitoring Western Power’s progress throughout its fifth access arrangement. The ERA is monitoring three key areas: regional reliability, connection times for generators, large businesses, industrial and mining customers, and streetlighting.

Regional Reliability

ERACCC members discussed the financial penalties that will apply if Western Power fails to meet the rural long service benchmark, which is set at 290 minutes and the corresponding “reward” that Western Power will receive if it can demonstrate progress towards improved reliability. The Secretariat explained its view of the need to continue to incentivise progress.

ERACCC members discussed the lived experience of people receiving electricity via rural long transmission lines, their willingness to invest in their own solutions, and ideas to transition to standalone power systems to improve reliability and reduce the costs of maintaining the network. Members queried the cost of Western Power providing rural long services compared to standalone power systems and the ERA undertook to discuss with Western Power the possibility of including a cost analysis in its standalone power system roll-out strategy. The ERA advised it is encouraging Western Power to work with stakeholders and come up with effective solutions in addressing regional reliability.

ERACCC noted the need to ensure remote Aboriginal communities are also receiving reliable electricity, and that – separate to AA5 – there is a transition plan underway for Western Power and Horizon Power to assume responsibility for remote Aboriginal Communities currently served by the Department of Communities.

Network Connections

Western Power is receiving increasing applications for batteries and generators to connect to the network. The Chair noted this is a problem being experienced internationally due to the energy transformation.

The ERA provided an update that Western Power has published queuing data on its website.

Streetlighting

ERACCC members discussed the requirements for Western Power to consult effectively with local governments and other stakeholders, noting there are currently no financial penalties for failure to consult.

7. Approaches to stakeholder engagement

The ERA provided an overview of the ERA's plans to continue enhancing stakeholder engagement, including setting stronger expectations for regulated entities to consult and being more flexible, whilst maintaining transparency, with what the ERA will consider as a submission.

The ERA sought ERACCC members' continued feedback on the ERA's stakeholder engagement approach.

8. Member updates

The Financial Counsellor's Association's annual conference is on 24-26 October.

9. ERA upcoming consultations

ERACCC members noted the ERA's upcoming consultations.

The ERA advised members it will be seeking expressions of interest from consumer representative organisations to join the Gas Market Consultative Committee, and that the time commitment is expected to be relatively small.

10. ERA upcoming decisions

ERACCC members noted the ERA's upcoming decisions.

11. Meeting closed at 12:00pm

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 20 March 2024.