



Notice

17 October 2016

Comment invited on proposed amendments to the Compendium of Gas Customer Licence Obligations

The Economic Regulation Authority (ERA) seeks public comment on proposed amendments to the *Compendium of Gas Customer Licence Obligations* (**compendium**).

- [Compendium \(marked up\)](#)
- [Compendium \(clean\)](#)

The compendium regulates the conduct of gas licensees in dealing with their customers, and sets service standards in areas such as billing, payments, financial hardship, disconnections, reconnections and complaints handling.

Amendments to maintain consistency with the Electricity Code

The ERA amended the *Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers* in June 2016. The ERA proposes to amend the compendium so it is, to the extent possible, consistent with the electricity code, to ensure both gas and electricity customers receive a similar level of protection.

Amendments to gas billing cycle

The most significant proposed amendment to the compendium is to increase the maximum interval between gas bills from three months (approximately 92 days) to 105 days.

Currently, the compendium requires a retailer to issue a bill at least once every three months. To meet this obligation, a retailer needs to receive the customer's meter reading data from the distributor in time to issue the bill. However, distributors are not obliged to read a gas meter at least once every three months.

The ERA understands that two gas distributors, Esperance Power Station and Wesfarmers Kleenheat Gas Pty Ltd, provide metering data to retailers in time for them to issue their bills at least once every three months. The third, and largest, distributor, ATCO Gas Australia Pty Ltd (**ATCO**), provides approximately 30 per cent of its metering data at intervals longer than three months.

Retailers are unable to meet their obligations under the compendium for customers whose meters are read at intervals greater than three months. The ERA wants to ensure that all retailers are able to issue a bill based upon an actual meter reading within the timeframes specified in the compendium. To achieve this, either ATCO needs to read its meters more frequently, or retailers need to be able to issue bill less frequently.

The ERA considers that the costs involved in increasing the frequency of meter readings outweigh the benefits of customers receiving a bill every three months. The benefits of basing a bill on an actual meter readings were recently considered by the Australian Energy Market Commission. The Commission approved a change to the National Energy Retail Rules to increase the maximum interval between bills issued by electricity and gas retailers from at least once every three months to at least once every 100 days (for customers on standard offer contracts). The Commission made this change to increase the

proportion of bills that would be based on an actual meter reading. Basing bills on actual meter readings allows customers to keep track of their usage and avoid the risk of accumulating debt caused by receiving one or more estimated bills.

Interested parties are invited to make submissions on the proposed amendments by **Friday 4 November 2016**.

Submissions should be sent to:

Postal address: ERA, PO Box 8469, PERTH BC WA 6849

Office address: Level 4, Albert Facey House, 469 Wellington Street, PERTH WA 6000

Email address: publicsubmissions@erawa.com.au

CONFIDENTIALITY

In general, all submissions from interested parties will be treated as being in the public domain and placed on the Authority's website. Where an interested party wishes to make a submission in confidence, it should clearly indicate the parts of the submission for which confidentiality is claimed, and specify in reasonable detail the basis for the claim. Any claim of confidentiality will be considered in accordance with the provisions of *Economic Regulation Authority Act 2003*.

The publication of a submission on the Authority's website shall not be taken as indicating that the Authority has knowledge either actual or constructive of the contents of a particular submission and, in particular, whether the submission in whole or part contains information of a confidential nature and no duty of confidence will arise for the Authority.

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