

Review of Synergy Customer Service Charter

22 July 2009

Economic Regulation Authority

 WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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DECISION

1. The Economic Regulation Authority (**Authority**) finds that Synergy's review of its Customer Service Charter (**charter**) for the supply of electricity and the reviewed charter meet the requirements of Synergy's Electricity Retail Licence 1 (**licence**).

REASONS

2. The Authority has assessed the review and the charter against the requirements of Synergy's licence and notes the following:

Existence

3. Clause 15.1 of the licence states that the licensee must prepare a charter if it supplies electricity to small use customers. Clause 15.2 of the licence requires that Synergy review the charter at least once every 36 months from the grant of the licence. As the licence was granted to Synergy on 30 March 2006, the charter review was due by 30 March 2009.
4. Synergy submitted an outline of the charter review process undertaken and the reviewed charter for assessment on 16 April 2009. The Secretariat of the Authority provided feedback to Synergy regarding the charter which resulted in Synergy submitting a revised, final version of the charter on 8 July 2009.
5. The Authority finds that Synergy has submitted its charter within an acceptable timeframe.

Accuracy

6. Section 82 of the *Electricity Industry Act 2004* provides that it is a condition of every retail licence that the licensee comply with the provisions of the *Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers* (**Code of Conduct**) that apply to the licensee.
7. Clause 11.1(2) of the Code of Conduct states that a charter must at least include a summary of the customer's and retailer's rights and obligations under the Code of Conduct. In addition, a charter should include an explanation of the retailer's complaints handling process and the difference between distribution and retail functions, reference to key documents in relation to the supply of electricity to customers, and contact details of the retailer, the Authority, Energy Safety (Department of Commerce) and the electricity ombudsman. Clause 10.11(2) of the Code of Conduct requires that a charter include the retailer's telephone numbers for TTY services and for independent multi-lingual services.
8. The Authority finds that the contents of the charter is generally consistent with the relevant legislation and licence requirements.

Consultation

9. Clause 15.4 of the licence states that any review of the charter should have regard to the Customer Service Charter Guidelines (**guidelines**). Paragraph 6.3 of the guidelines requires a licensee to engage with its customers and/or their representatives in the review of their charter.
10. Synergy has advised that it undertook an external review of the charter in the period January-March 2009. The charter was provided to the members of Synergy's Customer Advocacy Committee for their review with a written invitation to provide comments. Members of the Customer Advocacy Committee include:
 - Financial Counsellors' Association
 - Anglicare WA
 - Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS)
 - People With Disabilities (WA) Inc
 - Country Women's Association
 - Tenants Advice Service

No written comments were received. The Customer Advocacy Committee was provided with a presentation on Synergy's charter at a meeting on 11 March 2009. A number of comments were provided during the meeting, some of which were incorporated in the charter.

11. The charter was also provided to the Energy Ombudsman for comment who proposed some minor changes to the charter. Synergy also undertook an internal review of the charter, with comments provided by various departments.
12. The Authority finds that, on the basis of the information provided, Synergy undertook a sound level of public consultation with regard to this review.

Accessibility

13. Clause 15.4 of the licence states that any review of the charter should have regard to the guidelines. Paragraph 6.4 of the guidelines requires a charter to be prepared in simple language that is easily understood by customers.
14. The Authority finds that the charter is generally written in a 'plain English' manner.

LYNDON ROWE
CHAIRMAN

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