

QUEENSLAND COMPETITION AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF CONSUMER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, 25 MARCH 2009 – 10:00AM

LEVEL 19, 12 CREEK STREET, BRISBANE

PRESENT: Members

Mr Joe Owen (Queensland Competition Authority Acting Presiding Officer)

Ms Jo Dower (Queensland Council of Social Services, representing Ms Jill Lang)

Mr David Lawson (Financial Counselors Association of Queensland)

Mr Ian Jarratt (Queensland Consumers Association)

Observers

Mr John Jones (Energy Ombudsman Queensland, representing Mr Barry Adams CEO)

Mr Darren Schneider (Department of Mines and Energy)

Ms Salma Osman (Department of Mines and Energy)

Mr Adam Liddy, Ms Yewy Tan (QCA)

APOLOGIES: Mr Gary Henry (QCA, Presiding Officer)

Ms Penny Carr (Tenants Union of Queensland)

Mr Barry Adams (Energy Ombudsman Queensland)

MINUTES

1. The Committee resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2008 be accepted as a true record of proceedings.

GENERAL BUSINESS

2. Status of *Customer Complaints and Disconnection Data*
Outstanding Issues

Members were provided with an overview of the provisions of the Electricity and Gas Industry Codes and the options that might be available to increase the frequency of reporting and usefulness of data reported by retailers on customer complaints and disconnection.

The Authority noted that changing the reporting frequency or type of data collected would require a significant Code change.

Members discussed how a review might proceed.

It was noted that EOQ was currently developing disaggregated complaints categories in coordination with other jurisdictions and that this might form a useful basis for considering complaints categories.

Members requested that consideration also be given to the categories of

complaints data used in other states and it was noted that information on people unable to pay their bills as a consequence of experiencing hardship was better collated in other states.

It was also suggested that any review consider the definitions and terminology being used by retailers, for example 'de-energisation' in place of 'disconnection' was misleading.

MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

3. Benchmark Retail Cost Index for 2009-10
- Members were provided with an update on progress of the 2009-10 BRCI.
- Members were advised that the Authority had invited stakeholders to provide further submissions addressing the impact of the global financial crisis on the calculation of the BRCI following receipt of the latest Delegation from the Minister.
- It was noted that there had been concerns expressed in submissions in regard to the calculation of customer acquisition costs and that a more robust approach was desirable.
4. Judicial Review of 2008-09 BRCI Decision
- Members were provided with an update on the judicial review of the 2008-09 BRCI Decision.
5. Increase in the Non-disconnection Threshold (Item requested by FCAQ, QCOSS, Queensland Consumers Association and Tenants Union).
- Members discussed the setting of the non-disconnection threshold.
6. Special Meter Reads (Item requested by Queensland Consumers Association, FCAQ, QCOSS, and Tenants Union).
- Queensland Consumers Association provided an overview of the 'Special Meter Reads' item. It was noted that there is a provision in the Code to remove the prohibition on special meter reads for *in-situ* transfers to other retailers. However, it was suggested that any change should be conditional on consumer consent.
- It was noted that other jurisdictions currently allow special meter reads in similar situations.
- It was also noted that the maximum fees charged by distributors for a special meter read are set in regulation and that these charges should be made be cost reflective if any change was to be made to the provisions in the Code.
7. Code enforcement issues.
- Agenda papers were noted.

8. QCA Decisions since last meeting. Agenda papers were noted.
Members discussed the following issues:
MSS and GSL Review Draft Decision
Electricity Market and Non-market customer statistics
9. Future QCA decisions and consultations. Agenda papers were noted.
10. Schedule of Ordinary Meetings. The Schedule of Ordinary Meetings was accepted by Members.
11. EOQ update EOQ provided an update of recent activity noting that the number of complaints received by EOQ had increased significantly over the past year.
Billing complaints remained the most common complaint addressed by EOQ, accounting for approximately 70% of complaints.
12. Update from DME. DME provided an update on matters of interest being handled by the Department.
13. Other issues It was noted that an article - 'Power Play' – had appeared in Choice Magazine (March 2009) and which looked at the four most competitive states (Vic, SA, NSW and QLD) to see what drives consumers to switch electricity retailers.

Meeting concluded 12:15 pm

NEXT MEETING The next ordinary meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday 27 May 2009 from 10:00am to 12:00pm.