

Decision on amendments to the Compendium of Gas Customer Licence Obligations

21 November 2016

Economic Regulation Authority

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Decision

1. The Economic Regulation Authority (**ERA**) has approved amendments to the *Compendium of Gas Customer Licence Obligations* (**Compendium**). The Compendium forms Schedule 2 of all gas trading and gas distribution licences.
2. Copies of the amended Compendium are attached, with the first showing tracked changes (**Appendix 1**) and the second being a clean version (**Appendix 2**).

Background

3. The Compendium ensures that gas customers are entitled to customer protection equivalent to that afforded to electricity customers under the *Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers* (**Electricity Code**).
4. Following a review of the Electricity Code in 2015-16, the ERA approved a number of amendments to the Electricity Code which took effect on 1 July 2016.
5. To ensure that protection remains as consistent as possible across the electricity and gas industries, the ERA proposed similar amendments to the Compendium. The ERA also proposed to increase the maximum interval between bills from 3 months to 105 days.
6. The proposed amendments to the Compendium were released for public consultation on 17 October 2016 for a period of three weeks. Three submissions were received and are available in **Appendix 3**.
7. Alinta Energy and Synergy are supportive of all the amendments to the Compendium. ATCO Gas Australia (**ATCO**) has provided comments on two issues. ATCO supports the amendment to the billing cycle. In relation to updating the complaints standard from AS ISO 10002-2006 to AS/NZS 10002:2014, ATCO has suggested that the new standard come into effect on 1 April 2017 instead of 1 January 2017 to allow more time for licensees to be compliant.
8. The ERA notes that the new complaints standard is already in effect due to clause 1.2(3) in the Compendium. Clause 1.2(3) states that:

A reference to a document or a provision of a document includes an amendment or supplement to, or replacement of or novation of, that document or that provision of that document.
9. As the new complaints standard is already in force, the ERA has not accepted the suggestion from ATCO. The ERA agrees with ATCO's statement in its submission that the changes introduced by the new standard are unlikely to have a major impact.
10. On 20 October 2016, the ERA's Secretariat also held a meeting with key stakeholders to discuss and obtain feedback on the ERA's proposed amendments. All gas licensees subject to the Compendium were invited to this meeting.
11. The ERA intends to amend all gas trading and distribution licences by replacing the current version of the Compendium with the new, amended version of the Compendium. The ERA also intends to remove clauses 5 and 6 of Schedule 3 from

Alinta Sales Pty Ltd's (trading as Alinta Energy) trading licence. These clauses allowed Alinta Energy to issue a bill once every 110 days (instead of once every 3 months) and provided for consequential changes to Alinta Energy's record keeping obligations.¹ The amendment to the Compendium has made Alinta Energy's special licence conditions redundant.

12. Under section 11M(1) of the *Energy Coordination Act 1994*, a licence is subject to such terms and conditions as determined by the ERA.
13. Under the terms of gas trading and distribution licences, the ERA must, before amending a gas licence, notify the licensee in writing of the proposed amendment, allow the licensee 15 business days to comment on the proposed amendment, and take any comments received into consideration.
14. The ERA will now write to all gas trading and distribution licensees advising them of the proposed amendment to their licence and giving them 15 business days to make a submission on the proposed amendments.

¹ This is result of an amendment to Alinta's gas trading licence in 2012. For further information refer to the ERA's Decision published on 17 September 2012
[https://www.erawa.com.au/cproof/14491/2/Consultation%20on%20Review%20of%20the%20Water%20Services%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20\(Customer%20Services%20Standards\)%202013.pdf](https://www.erawa.com.au/cproof/14491/2/Consultation%20on%20Review%20of%20the%20Water%20Services%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20(Customer%20Services%20Standards)%202013.pdf)

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Appendix 1 Amended Compendium of Gas Customer Licence Obligations (marked-up)

Schedule 2

***Compendium of Gas Customer Licence
Obligations***

(Compendium)

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Part 1 Preliminary

1.1 Commencement of Schedule 2

The obligations in this Schedule 2 apply to the **retailer** and **distributor** (as the case may be) on and from 1 January ~~2015~~2017.

1.2 Interpretation of Schedule 2

- (1) Headings and notes are for convenience or information only and do not affect the interpretation of the conditions in this Schedule 2 or of any term or condition set out in this Schedule 2.
- (2) An expression imparting a natural person includes any company, partnership, trust, joint venture, association, corporation or other body corporate and any governmental agency and vice versa.
- (3) A reference to a document or a provision of a document includes an amendment or supplement to, or replacement of or novation of, that document or that provision of that document.
- (4) A reference to a person includes that person's executors, administrators, successors, substitutes (including, without limitation, persons taking by novation) and permitted assigns.
- (5) Other parts of speech and grammatical forms of a word or phrase defined in this Schedule 2 have a corresponding meaning.
- (6) The definitions in Schedule 2 only apply to the terms and conditions in Schedule 2 of this licence and will not apply to any of the other parts of this licence.
- (7) Where clause 2 of the licence:
 - (a) authorises the licensee to sell gas transported through a distribution system to **customers**, a reference to a **retailer** in this Schedule 2 is a reference to the licensee (as defined in clause 1 of the main body of the licence);
 - (b) authorises the licensee to:
 - (i) construct, alter or operate a distribution system; or
 - (ii) transport gas through a distribution system,a reference to a **distributor** in this Schedule 2 is a reference to the licensee (as defined in clause 1 of the main body of the licence).

1.3 Definitions for Schedule 2

In this Schedule 2, unless the contrary intention appears –

“**Act**” means the *Energy Coordination Act 1994*.

“**adjustment**” means the difference in the amount charged –

- (a) in a bill or series of bills based on an estimate carried out in accordance with clause 4.8; or

- (b) under a bill smoothing arrangement based on an estimate carried out in accordance with clause 4.3(2)(a)-(b),

and the amount to be charged as a result of a bill being determined in accordance with clause 4.6(1)(a) provided that the difference is not as a result of a defect, error or default for which the **retailer** or **distributor** is responsible or contributed to.

“**alternative tariff**” means a tariff other than the tariff under which the **customer** is currently supplied gas.

“**Australian Standard**” means a standard published by Standards Australia.

“**Authority**” means the Economic Regulation Authority established under the *Economic Regulation Authority Act 2003*.

“**basic living needs**” includes –

- (a) rent or mortgage;
- (b) other utilities (e.g., electricity, phone and water);
- (c) food and groceries;
- (d) transport (including petrol and car expenses);
- (e) childcare and school fees;
- (f) clothing; and
- (g) medical and dental expenses.

“**billing cycle**” means the regular recurrent period in which a **customer** receives a bill from a **retailer**.

“**business customer**” means a **customer** who is not a **residential customer**.

“**business day**” means any day except a Saturday, Sunday or **public holiday**.

“**call centre**” means a dedicated centre that has the purpose of receiving and transmitting **telephone** calls in relation to customer service operations of the **retailer** or **distributor**, as relevant, and consists of call centre staff and 1 or more information technology and communications systems designed to handle customer service calls and record call centre performance information.

“**change in personal circumstances**” includes –

- (a) sudden and unexpected disability, illness of or injury to the **residential customer** or a dependant of the **residential customer**;
- (b) loss of or damage to property of the **residential customer**; or
- (c) other similar unforeseeable circumstances arising as a result of events beyond the control of the **residential customer**.

“**Compendium**” means this Schedule 2 titled *Compendium of Gas Customer Licence Obligations (Compendium)*.

“**collective customer**” means a **customer**: –

- (a) who receives a single bill from the **retailer** for gas supplied at two or more **premises supply addresses**; or
- (b) who is supplied gas from the same **retailer** at multiple sites at ~~the customer's premises~~ **a single supply address**.

“**complaint**” means an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, ~~or~~ services, staff or the ~~complaints~~

handling ~~process itself~~ of a [complaint](#), where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected [or legally required](#).

“**concession**” means a concession, rebate, subsidy or grant related to the supply of gas available to **residential customers** only.

“**contact**” means contact that is face to face, by **telephone** or by post, facsimile or **electronic means**.

“**contract**” means a **standard form contract** or a **non-standard contract**.

“**customer**” means a customer whose consumption of gas is less than 1 terajoule per year.

“**direct debit facility**” means a facility offered by a **retailer** to automatically deduct a payment from a **customer's** nominated account and entered into with a **customer** in accordance with clause 5.3.

“**disconnection warning**” means a notice in writing issued in accordance with clause 7.1(1)(c) or clause 7.4(1).

“**distributor**” means a person who holds a distribution licence under Part 2A of the **Act**.

“**dual fuel contract**” means a **contract** for the sale of electricity and for the sale of gas by a **retailer** to a **customer**.

“**electronic means**” means the internet, email, facsimile, [SMS](#) or other similar means but does not include **telephone**.

“**emergency**” means an emergency due to the actual or imminent occurrence of an event which in any way endangers or threatens to endanger the safety or health of any person in Western Australia or which destroys or damages, or threatens to destroy or damage, any property in Western Australia.

“**financial hardship**” means a state of more than immediate financial disadvantage which results in a **residential customer** being unable to pay an outstanding amount as required by a **retailer** without affecting the ability to meet the **basic living needs** of the **residential customer** or a dependant of the **residential customer**.

“**gas customer safety awareness programme**” means a programme to communicate information to **customers** regarding safety in the use of gas and must address, at a minimum, provision of the following information to **customers** –

- (a) information on the properties of gas relevant to its use by **customers**;
- (b) a notice of the requirement for proper installation and use of approved appliances and equipment;
- (c) a notice of the requirement to use only qualified trade persons for gas connection and appliance and equipment installation;
- (d) the proper procedure for the reporting of gas leaks or appliance or equipment defects; and
- (e) safety procedures to be followed and the appropriate **telephone** number to call in case of **emergency**.

“**gas marketing agent**” has the meaning given to that term in the **Gas Marketing Code**.

“**Gas Marketing Code**” means the *Gas Marketing Code of Conduct 2014*~~2015~~, [as amended or repealed and replaced by the Authority under Part C of the Act](#).

“**gas ombudsman**” means the ombudsman appointed under the scheme approved by the **Authority** pursuant to section 11ZPZ of the **Act**.

[Note: The Energy and Water Ombudsman Western Australia is the **gas ombudsman** appointed under the scheme approved by the **Authority** pursuant to section 11ZPZ of the **Act**.]

“**historical debt**” means an amount outstanding for the supply of gas by a **retailer** to a **customer’s** previous **supply address** or **supply addresses**.

“**instalment plan**” means an arrangement between a **retailer** and a **customer** to assist the **customer** to remain connected, reduce its arrears and minimise the risk of the **customer** getting into further debt where the **customer** pays in arrears or in advance and continued usage on its account according to an agreed payment schedule (generally involving payment of at least 3 instalments) taking into account the **customer’s** capacity to pay. It does not include **customers** using ~~a payment plan~~ [an instalment plan](#) as a matter of convenience or for flexible budgeting purposes.

“**interruption**” means the temporary unavailability of supply from the distribution system to a **customer**, but does not include disconnection under Part 7.

“**marketing**” includes engaging or attempting to engage in any of the following activities by any means, including door to door or by **telephone** or other **electronic means** –

- (a) negotiations for, or dealings in respect of, a **contract** for the supply of gas to a **customer**; or
- (b) advertising, promotion, market research or public relations in relation to the supply of gas to **customers**.

“**meter**” means an instrument that measures the quantity of gas passing through it and includes associated equipment attached to the instrument to filter, control or regulate the flow of gas.

“**metering agent**” means a person responsible for reading the **meter** on behalf of the **distributor**.

“**National Interpreter Symbol**” means the national public information symbol “Interpreter Symbol” (with text) developed by Victoria in partnership with the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments in accordance with **Australian Standard** 2342.

“**non-standard contract**” means a contract entered into between a **retailer** and a **customer**, or a class of **customers**, that is not a **standard form contract**.

“**overcharging**” means the amount by which the amount charged in a bill or under a bill smoothing arrangement is greater than the amount that would have been charged if the amount of the bill was determined in accordance with clause 4.6(1)(a) as a result of some defect, error or default for which the **retailer** or **distributor** is responsible or contributed to, but does not include an **adjustment**.

“**payment difficulties**” means a state of immediate financial disadvantage that results in a **residential customer** being unable to pay an outstanding amount as required by a **retailer** by reason of a **change in personal circumstances**.

“**payment problems**” includes, without limitation, payment problems relating to *historical debt*.

“**premises**” means premises owned or occupied by a new or existing *customer*.

“**pre-payment meter**” means a *meter* that requires a *customer* to pay for the supply of gas prior to consumption.

“**public holiday**” means a public holiday in Western Australia.

“**relevant consumer representative-organisation**” means ~~an organisation~~ that a person who may reasonably be expected to represent the interests of *residential customers* who are experiencing *payment difficulties* or *financial hardship*, and includes financial counsellors.

“**reminder notice**” means a notice in writing issued in accordance with clause 7.1(1)(a).

“**reporting year**” means a year commencing on 1 July and ending on 30 June.

“**residential customer**” means a *customer* who consumes gas solely for domestic use.

“**resolved**” means the decision or determination made by the *retailer* or *distributor* (as relevant) with respect to the *complaint*, where the *retailer* or *distributor*, having regard to the nature and particular circumstances of the *complaint*, has used all reasonable steps to ensure the best possible approach to addressing the *complaint*.

“**retail market rules**” means the *Retail Market Rules* published by the Retail Energy Market Company Limited as amended from time to time.

“**retailer**” means a person who holds a trading licence under Part 2A of the *Act*.

“**standard form contract**” means a contract that is approved by the *Authority* under section 11WF of the *Act*.

“**supply address**” means the *premises* to which gas was, is or may be supplied under a *contract*.

“**telephone**” means a device which is used to transmit and receive voice frequency signals.

“**temporary suspension of actions**” means a situation where a *retailer* temporarily suspends all disconnection and debt recovery procedures without entering into an alternative payment arrangement under clause 6.4(1).

“**TTY**” means a teletypewriter.

“**undercharging**” includes, without limitation –

- (a) the failure to issue a bill in accordance with clause 4.1 or clause 4.2 or to issue a bill under a bill smoothing arrangement; or
- (b) the amount by which the amount charged in a bill or under a bill smoothing arrangement is less than the amount that would have been charged if the amount of the bill was determined in accordance with clause 4.6(1)(a) as a result of some defect, error or default for which the *retailer* or *distributor* is responsible or contributed to, but does not include an *adjustment*.

“**verifiable consent**” means consent that is given –

- (a) expressly;
- (b) in writing or orally;
- (c) after the **gas marketing agent** or **retailer** (whichever is relevant) has in plain language appropriate to that **customer** disclosed all matters materially relevant to the giving of the consent, including each specific purpose for which the consent will be used; and
- (d) by the **customer** or a nominated person competent to give consent on the **customer's** behalf.

1.4 ~~Non application of certain clauses~~ Variation from the Compendium

The following clauses (marked with an asterisk ~~and an annotation~~ throughout) will not apply to a **retailer** where the **retailer** has entered into a **non-standard contract** with a **customer** and the **retailer** and **customer** agree that the clauses will not apply.

- (a) 4.1;
- (b) 4.2;
- (c) 5.1;
- (d) 5.2;
- (e) 5.4;
- (f) 5.7; and
- (g) 8.1.

1.5 **Gas marketing agents**

A **retailer** must ensure that any **gas marketing agent** engaged by the **retailer** complies with the obligations under this Schedule 2.

**Part 2
NOT USED**

[Note – Part 2 is not used to ensure conformity of numbering with the Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers.]

| *[Obligations relating to the marketing of gas to small use customers are addressed in the Gas Marketing Code ~~of Conduct 2014.~~]*

Part 3 Connection

3.1 Obligation to forward connection application

- (1) If a **retailer** agrees to sell gas to a **customer** or arrange for the connection of the **customer's supply address**, the **retailer** must forward the **customer's** request for connection to the relevant **distributor** for the purpose of arranging for the connection of the **customer's supply address** (if the **customer's supply address** is not already connected).
- (2) Unless the **customer** agrees otherwise, a **retailer** must forward the **customer's** request for connection to the relevant **distributor** –
 - (a) that same day, if the request is received before 3pm on a **business day**; or
 - (b) the next **business day**, if the request is received after 3pm or on a Saturday, Sunday or **public holiday**.
- (3) In this clause –

“customer” includes a **customer's** nominated representative.

Part 4 Billing

Division 1 – Billing cycles

4.1 Billing cycle*

A **retailer** must issue a bill –

- (a) no more than once a month, unless the **retailer** has –
 - (i) obtained a **customer's verifiable consent** to issue bills more frequently; ~~or~~
 - (ii) given the **customer** –
 - A. a **reminder notice** in respect of 3 consecutive bills; and
 - B. notice as contemplated under clause 4.2; ~~and/or~~
 - (iii) received a request from the **customer** to change their **supply address** or issue a final bill, in which case the **retailer** may issue a bill more than once a month for the purposes of facilitating the request; and
- (b) at least every ~~3 months~~ 105 days unless –
 - (i) the **retailer** has obtained ~~a~~ the **customer's verifiable consent** to issue bills less frequently;
 - (ii) the **customer** has a **pre-payment meter** installed at the **customer's supply address**;
 - (iii) the **retailer** has not received the required metering data from the **distributor** for the purposes of preparing the bill, despite using best endeavours to obtain the metering data from the **distributor**; or
 - (iv) the **retailer** is unable to comply with this timeframe due to the actions of the **customer** where the **customer** is supplied under a deemed contract pursuant to section 11WK of the **Act** and the bill is the first bill issued to that **customer** at that **supply address**.

4.2 Shortened billing cycle*

- (1) For the purposes of clause 4.1(a)(ii), a **retailer** has given a **customer** notice if the **retailer** has advised the **customer**, prior to placing the **customer** on a shortened **billing cycle**, that –
 - (a) receipt of a third **reminder notice** may result in the **customer** being placed on a shortened **billing cycle**;
 - (b) if the **customer** is a **residential customer**, assistance is available for **residential customers** experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**;
 - (c) the **customer** may obtain further information from the **retailer** on a specified **telephone** number; and

- (d) once on a shortened **billing cycle**, the **customer** must pay 3 consecutive bills by the due date to return to the **customer's** previous **billing cycle**.
- (2) Notwithstanding clause 4.1(a)(ii), a **retailer** must not place a **residential customer** on a shortened **billing cycle** without the **customer's verifiable consent** if –
 - (a) the **residential customer** informs the **retailer** that the **residential customer** is experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**; and
 - (b) the assessment carried out under clause 6.1 indicates to the **retailer** that the **customer** is experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**.
- (3) If, after giving notice as required under clause 4.1(a)(ii), a **retailer** decides to shorten the **billing cycle** in respect of a **customer**, the **retailer** must give the **customer** written notice of that decision within 10 **business days** of making that decision.
- (4) A shortened **billing cycle** must be at least 10 **business days**.
- (5) A **retailer** must return a **customer**, who is subject to a shortened **billing cycle** and has paid 3 consecutive bills by the due date, on request, to the **billing cycle** that applied to the **customer** before the shortened **billing cycle** commenced.
- (6) A **retailer** must inform a **customer**, who is subject to a shortened **billing cycle**, at least once every 3 months that, if the **customer** pays 3 consecutive bills by the due date of each bill, the **customer** will be returned, on request, to the **billing cycle** that applied to the **customer** before the shortened **billing cycle** commenced.

4.3 Bill smoothing

- (1) ~~Despite~~ Notwithstanding clause 4.1, in respect of any 12 month period, on receipt of a request by a **customer**, a **retailer** may provide ~~at~~ the **customer** with a bill which reflects a bill smoothing arrangement.
- (2) If a **retailer** provides a **customer** with a bill under a bill smoothing arrangement pursuant to subclause (1), the **retailer** must ensure that –
 - (a) the amount payable under each bill is initially the same and is set out on the basis of –
 - (i) the **retailer's** initial estimate of the amount of gas the **customer** will consume over the 12 month period;
 - (ii) the relevant supply charge for the consumption and any other charges related to the supply of gas agreed with the **customer**;
 - (iii) any **adjustment** from a previous bill smoothing arrangement (after being adjusted in accordance with clause 4.19); and
 - (iv) any other relevant information provided by the **customer**.
 - (b) ~~that~~ the initial estimate is based on the **customer's** historical billing data or, where the **retailer** does not have that data, the likely average consumption at the relevant tariff calculated over the 12 month period as estimated by the **retailer**;
 - (c) ~~that on~~ in or before the seventh month –

- (i) the **retailer** re-estimates the amount under subclause (2)(a)(i), taking into account any **meter** readings and relevant seasonal and other factors agreed with the **customer**; and
 - (ii) unless otherwise agreed if there is a difference between the initial estimate and the re-estimate of greater than 10%, the amount payable under each of the remaining bills in the 12 month period is to be re-set to reflect that difference; and
- (d) ~~that,~~ at the end of the 12 month period, or any other time agreed between the **retailer** and the **customer** and at the end of the bill smoothing arrangement, the **meter** is read and any **adjustment** is included on the next bill in accordance with clause 4.19; and
- (e) the **retailer** has obtained the **customer's verifiable consent** to the **retailer** billing on that basis.

4.4 How bills are issued

A **retailer** must issue a bill to a **customer** at the address nominated by the customer, which may be an email address ~~customer's supply address, unless the customer has nominated another address or an electronic address.~~

Division 2 - Contents of a Bill

4.5 Particulars on each bill

- (1) Unless ~~the~~ a **customer** agrees otherwise, ~~subject to subclause (i),~~ a **retailer** must include at least the following information on ~~a~~ the **customer's** bill –
- (a) either the range of dates of the metering supply period or the date of the current **meter** reading or estimate;
 - (b) the current **meter** reading or estimate;
 - (c) the **customer's** consumption, or estimated consumption;
 - (d) the number of days covered by the bill;
 - (e) the dates on which the account period begins and ends, if different from the range of dates of the metering supply period or the range of dates of the metering supply period have not been included on the bill already;
 - (f) the applicable tariffs;
 - (g) the amount of any other fees or charges and details of the service provided;
 - (h) with respect to a **residential customer**, a statement that the **residential customer** may be eligible to receive **concessions** and how the **residential customer** may find out its eligibility for those **concessions**;
 - (i) if applicable, the value and type of any **concessions** provided to the **residential customer** that are administered by the **retailer**;
 - (j) if applicable, a statement on the bill that an additional fee may be imposed to cover the costs of late payment from ~~a~~ the **customer**;
 - (k) the average daily cost of consumption, including charges ancillary to the consumption of gas, unless the **customer** is a **collective customer**;

- (l) the average daily consumption, unless the **customer** is a **collective customer**;
 - (m) a **meter** identification number (clearly placed on the part of the bill that is retained by the **customer**);
 - (n) the amount due;
 - (o) the due date;
 - (p) a summary of the payment methods;
 - (q) a statement advising the **customer** that assistance is available if the **customer** is experiencing problems paying the bill;
 - (r) a **telephone** number for billing and payment enquiries;
 - (s) a **telephone** number for **complaints**;
 - (t) the contact details for the **gas ombudsman**;
 - (u) the **distributor's** 24 hour **telephone** number for faults and **emergencies**;
 - (v) the **supply address** and any relevant mailing address;
 - (w) the **customer's** name and account number;
 - (x) the amount of arrears or credit;
 - (y) if applicable and not included on a separate statement –
 - (i) payments made under an **instalment plan**; and
 - (ii) the total amount outstanding under the **instalment plan**;
 - (z) with respect to **residential customers**, the [telephone number for interpreter services together with the National Interpreter Symbol](#) ~~with~~ [and](#) the words "Interpreter Services";
 - (aa) the ~~retailer's~~ **telephone** number for **TTY** services;
 - (bb) to the extent that the data is available, a graph or bar chart illustrating the **customer's** amount due or consumption for the period covered by the bill, the previous bill and the bill for the same period last year; and
 - (cc) the Meter Installation Registration Number for the property.
- (2) Notwithstanding subclause (1)(bb), a **retailer** is not obliged to include a graph or bar chart on the bill if the bill is –
- (a) not indicative of ~~the~~ [a](#) **customer's** actual consumption;
 - (b) not based upon a **meter** reading; or
 - (c) for a **collective customer**.
- (3) If a **retailer** identifies a **historical debt** and wishes to bill ~~the~~ [a](#) **customer** for that **historical debt**, the **retailer** must advise the **customer** of –
- (a) the amount of the **historical debt**; and
 - (b) the basis of the **historical debt**,
- before, with, or on the **customer's** next bill.

Division 3 - Basis of Bill

4.6 Basis of bill

- (1) Subject to clause 4.8, a **retailer** must base a **customer's** bill on –
 - (a) the **distributor's** or **metering agent's** reading of the **meter** at the **customer's supply address**; or
 - (b) the **customer's** reading of the **meter** at the **customer's supply address**, provided the **retailer** requested and the **customer** agreed that the **customer** will read the **meter** for the purpose of determining the amount due.

4.7 Frequency of meter readings

- (1) A **retailer** must use its best endeavours to ensure that metering data is obtained as frequently as required to prepare its bills.
- (2) A **retailer** must ensure that at least once every 12 months it obtains metering data in accordance with clause 4.6(1)(a).

4.8 Estimations

- (1) If a **retailer** is unable to reasonably base a bill on a reading of the **meter** at a **customer's supply address**, the **retailer** must give the **customer** an estimated bill.
- (2) If a **retailer** bases a bill upon an estimation, the **retailer** must clearly specify ~~in a visible and legible manner~~ on the **customer's** bill that –
 - (a) the **retailer** has based the bill upon an estimation;
 - (b) the **retailer** will tell the **customer** on request –
 - (i) the basis of the estimation; and
 - (ii) the reason for the estimation; and
 - (c) the **customer** may request –
 - (i) a verification of ~~a meter reading~~ an estimation; and
 - (ii) a **meter** reading.
- (3) A **retailer** must tell a **customer** on request the –
 - (a) basis for the estimation; and
 - (b) reason for the estimation.

4.9 Adjustments to subsequent bills

If a **retailer** gives a **customer** an estimated bill and the **meter** is subsequently read, the **retailer** must include an **adjustment** on the next bill to take account of the actual **meter** reading in accordance with clause 4.19.

4.10 Customer may request meter reading

If a **retailer** has based a bill upon an estimation because ~~the~~ a **customer** failed to provide access to the **meter** and the **customer** –

- (a) subsequently requests the **retailer** to replace the estimated bill with a bill based on an actual reading of the **customer's meter**;
 - (b) pays the **retailer's** reasonable charge for reading the **meter** (if any); and
 - (c) provides due access to the **meter**,
- the **retailer** must do so.

Division 4 – Meter testing

4.11 Customer requests testing of meters or metering data

- (1) If a **customer** –
 - (a) requests the **meter** to be tested; and
 - (b) pays the **retailer's** reasonable charge for testing the **meter** (if any),the **retailer** must request the **distributor** or **metering agent** to test the **meter**.
- (2) If the **meter** is tested and found to be defective, the **retailer's** reasonable charge for testing the **meter** (if any) is to be refunded to the **customer**.

Division 5 – Alternative Tariffs

4.12 Customer applications

- (1) If a **retailer** offers **alternative tariffs** and a **customer** –
 - (a) applies to receive an **alternative tariff**, and
 - (b) demonstrates to the **retailer** that the **customer** satisfies all of the conditions relating to eligibility for the **alternative tariff**,the **retailer** must change the **customer** to the **alternative tariff** within 10 **business days** of the **customer** satisfying those conditions.
- (2) For the purposes of subclause (1), the effective date of change will be –
 - (a) the date on which the last **meter** reading at the previous tariff is obtained; or
 - (b) the date the **meter** adjustment is completed, if the change requires an adjustment to the **meter** at the **customer's supply address**.

4.13 Written notification of a change to an alternative tariff

If –

- (a) a **customer's** gas use at the **customer's supply address** changes or has changed; and
- (b) the **customer** is no longer eligible to continue to receive an existing, more beneficial tariff,

~~the~~ **a retailer** must, prior to changing the **customer** to the tariff applicable to the **customer's** use of gas at that **supply address**, give the **customer** written notice of the proposed change.

Division 6 – Final bill

4.14 Request for final bill

- (1) If a **customer** requests ~~the a~~ **retailer** to issue a final bill at the **customer's supply address**, the **retailer** must use reasonable endeavours to arrange for that bill in accordance with the **customer's** request.
- (2) If ~~the a~~ **customer's** account is in credit at the time of account closure, subject to subclause (3), ~~the a~~ **retailer** must, at the time of the final bill, ask the **customer** for instructions whether the **customer** requires the **retailer** to transfer the amount of credit to:
 - (a) another account the **customer** has, or will have, with the **retailer**; or
 - (b) a bank account nominated by the **customer**; andthe **retailer** must credit the account, or pay the amount of credit in accordance with the **customer's** instructions, within 12 **business days** of receiving the instructions or other such time as agreed with the **customer**.
- (3) If ~~the a~~ **customer's** account is in credit at the time of account closure, and the **customer** owes a debt to ~~the a~~ **retailer**, the **retailer** may, with written notice to the **customer**, use that credit to set off the debt owed to the **retailer**. If, after the set off, there remains an amount of credit, the **retailer** must ask the **customer** for instructions to transfer the remaining amount of credit in accordance with subclause (2).

Division 7 – Review of bill

4.15 Review of bill

Subject to a **customer** –

- (a) paying –
 - (i) that portion of the bill under review that the **customer** and a **retailer** agree is not in dispute; or
 - (ii) an amount equal to the average amount of the **customer's** bills over the previous 12 months (excluding the bill in dispute),
whichever is less; and
- (b) paying any future bills that are properly due,
a **retailer** must review the **customer's** bill on request by the **customer**.

4.16 Procedures following a review of a bill

- (1) If, after conducting a review of a bill, a **retailer** is satisfied that the bill is –
 - (a) correct, the **retailer** –
 - (i) may require a **customer** to pay the unpaid amount;
 - (ii) must advise the **customer** that the **customer** may request the **retailer** to arrange a **meter** test in accordance with applicable law; and

(iii) must advise the **customer** of the existence and operation of the **retailer's** internal **complaints** handling processes and details of any applicable external **complaints** handling processes,

or

(b) incorrect, the **retailer** must adjust the bill in accordance with clauses 4.17 and 4.18.

(2) ~~The~~ **A retailer** must inform a **customer** of the outcome of the review as soon as practicable.

(3) If ~~the~~ **a retailer** has not informed a **customer** of the outcome of the review within 20 **business days** from the date of receipt of the request for review under clause 4.15, the **retailer** must provide the **customer** with notification of the status of the review as soon as practicable.

Division 8 – Undercharging, overcharging and adjustment

4.17 Undercharging

(1) This clause 4.17 applies whether the **undercharging** became apparent through a review under clause 4.15 or otherwise.

(2) If a **retailer** proposes to recover an amount **undercharged** as a result of an error, defect or default for which the **retailer** or **distributor** is responsible (including where a **meter** has been found to be defective), the **retailer** must –

(a) subject to subclause (b), limit the amount to be recovered to no more than the amount **undercharged** in the 12 months prior to the date on which the **retailer** notified the **customer** that **undercharging** had occurred;

(b) other than in the event that the information provided by ~~the~~ **a customer** is incorrect, ~~where~~ **if** a **retailer** has changed ~~a~~ **the customer** to an **alternative tariff** in the circumstances set out in clause 4.13 and, as a result of the customer being ineligible to receive the tariff charged prior to the change~~as a result of that change~~, the **retailer** has **undercharged** ~~a~~ **the customer**, limit the amount to be recovered to no more than the amount **undercharged** in the 12 months prior to the date on which the **retailer** notified the **customer** under clause 4.13;

(c) notify the **customer** of the amount to be recovered no later than the next bill, together with an explanation of that amount;

(d) subject to subclause (3), not charge the **customer** interest on that amount or require the **customer** to pay a late payment fee; and

(e) in relation to a **residential customer**, offer the **customer** time to pay that amount by means of an **instalment plan** in accordance with clause 6.4(2) and covering a period at least equal to the period over which the recoverable **undercharging** occurred.

(3) If, after notifying a customer of the amount to be recovered in accordance with subclause (2)(c), the customer has failed to pay the amount to be recovered by the due date and has not entered into an instalment plan under subclause (2)(e), a retailer may charge the customer interest on that amount from the due date or require the customer to pay a late payment fee.

(4) For the purpose of subclause (2), an **undercharge** that has occurred as a result of a **customer** denying access to the **meter** is not an **undercharge** as a result of an error, defect or default for which a **retailer** or **distributor** is responsible.

4.18 Overcharging

- (1) This clause 4.18 applies whether the **overcharging** became apparent through a review under clause 4.15 or otherwise.
 - (2) If a **customer** (including a **customer** who has vacated the **supply address**) has been **overcharged** as a result of an error, defect or default for which a **retailer** or **distributor** is responsible (including where a **meter** has been found to be defective), the **retailer** must use its best endeavours to inform the **customer** accordingly within 10 **business days** of the **retailer** becoming aware of the error, defect or default and, subject to subclauses (6) and (7), ask the **customer** for instructions as to whether the amount should be –
 - (a) credited to the **customer's** account; or
 - (b) repaid to the **customer**.
 - (3) If a **retailer** receives instructions under subclause (2), the **retailer** must pay the amount in accordance with the **customer's** instructions within 12 **business days** of receiving the instructions.
 - (4) If a **retailer** does not receive instructions under subclause (2) within 5 **business days** of making the request, the **retailer** must use reasonable endeavours to credit the amount **overcharged** to the **customer's** account.
 - (5) No interest shall accrue to a credit or refund referred to in subclause (2).
 - (6) ~~Where~~ if the amount referred to in subclause (2) is less than ~~\$75~~ \$100, ~~the a~~ a **retailer** may, ~~notwithstanding subclause (2)~~, notify ~~the a~~ a **customer** of the **overcharge** by no later than the next bill after the **retailer** became aware of the error, and –
 - (a) ask the **customer** for instructions ~~pursuant to~~ under subclause (2) (in which case subclauses (3) and (4) apply as if the **retailer** sought instructions under subclause (2)); or
 - (b) credit the amount to the **customer's** next bill ~~account (in which case subclause (3) applies as if the customer instructed the retailer to credit the customer's account)~~.
 - (7) ~~Where the~~ if a **customer** has been overcharged by ~~the a~~ a **retailer**, and the **customer** owes a debt to the **retailer**, then provided that the **customer** is not a **residential customer** –
 - (a) experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**; ~~or~~
 - ~~(b) making payments under an alternative payment arrangement under Part 6,~~the **retailer** may, with written notice to the **customer**, use the amount of the **overcharge** to set off the debt owed to the **retailer**. If, after the set off, there remains an amount of credit, the **retailer** must deal with that amount of credit in accordance with subclause (2) or, if the amount is less than \$100, subclause (6) ~~where the amount is less than \$75~~.
- (a) Not Used
- (b) Not Used

4.19 Adjustments

- (1) If a **retailer** proposes to recover an amount of an **adjustment** which does not arise due to any act or omission of ~~the~~ a **customer**, the **retailer** must –
 - (a) limit the amount to be recovered to no more than the amount of the **adjustment** for the 12 months prior to the date on which the **meter** was read on the basis of the **retailer's** estimate of the amount of the **adjustment** for the 12 month period taking into account any **meter** readings and relevant seasonal and other factors agreed with the **customer**;
 - (b) notify the customer of the amount of the **adjustment** no later than the next bill, together with an explanation of that amount;
 - (c) not require the **customer** to pay a late payment fee; and
 - (d) in relation to a **residential customer**, offer the **customer** time to pay that amount by means of an **instalment plan** in accordance with clause 6.4(2) and covering a period at least equal to the period to which the **adjustment** related.
- (2) If the **meter** is read ~~pursuant to~~ under either clause 4.6 or clause 4.3(2)(d) and the amount of the **adjustment** is an amount owing to the **customer**, the **retailer** must use its best endeavours to inform the **customer** accordingly within 10 **business days** of the **retailer** becoming aware of the **adjustment** and, subject to subclauses (5) and (7), ask the **customer** for instructions as to whether the amount should be –
 - (a) credited to the **customer's** account;
 - (b) repaid to the **customer**, or
 - (c) included as a part of the new bill smoothing arrangement ~~where~~ if the **adjustment** arises under clause 4.3(2)(a)-(b).
- (3) If a **retailer** received instructions under subclause (2), the **retailer** must pay the amount in accordance with the **customer's** instructions within 12 **business days** of receiving the instructions.
- (4) If a **retailer** does not receive instructions under subclause (2) within 5 **business days** of making the request, the **retailer** must use reasonable endeavours to credit the amount of the **adjustment** to the **customer's** account.
- (5) ~~Where~~ if the amount referred to in subclause (2) is less than ~~\$75~~ \$100, the **retailer** may, ~~notwithstanding subclause (2)~~, notify the **customer** of the **adjustment** by no later than the next bill after the **meter** is read; and
 - (a) ask the **customer** for instructions ~~pursuant to~~ under subclause (2), (in which case subclauses (3) and (4) apply as if the **retailer** sought instructions under subclause (2)); or
 - (b) credit the amount to the **customer's** next bill account ~~(in which case subclause (3) applies as if the **customer** instructed the **retailer** to credit the **customer's** account)~~.
- (6) No interest shall accrue to an **adjustment** amount under subclause (1) or (2).
- (7) ~~Where~~ if the amount of the **adjustment** is an amount owing to the **customer**, and the **customer** owes a debt to the **retailer**, then provided that the **customer** is not a **residential customer** –

- ~~(a) experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**.~~
- ~~(b) making payments under an alternative payment arrangement under Part 6.~~

the **retailer** may, with written notice to the **customer**, use the amount of the **adjustment** to set off the debt owed to the **retailer**. If, after the set off, there remains an amount of credit, the **retailer** must deal with that amount of credit in accordance with subclause (2) or, if the amount is less than \$100, subclause (5) ~~where the amount is less than \$75~~.

(a) Not used

(b) Not used

Part 5 Payment

5.1 Due dates for payment*

- (1) The due date on a bill must be at least 12 **business days** from the date of that bill unless otherwise agreed with a customer.
- (2) Unless a **retailer** specifies a later date, the date of dispatch is the date of the bill.

5.2 Minimum payment methods*

Unless otherwise agreed with a customer, a **retailer** must offer ~~a~~ the customer at least the following payment methods –

- (a) in person at 1 or more payment outlets located within the Local Government District of the **customer's supply address**;
- (b) by mail;
- (c) for **residential customers**, by Centrepay;
- (d) electronically by means of BPay or credit card; and
- (e) by **telephone** by means of credit card or debit card.

5.3 Direct debit

If a **retailer** offers the option of payment by a **direct debit facility** to a **customer**, the **retailer** must, prior to the **direct debit facility** commencing, obtain the **customer's verifiable consent**, and agree with the **customer** the date of commencement of the **direct debit facility** and the frequency of the direct debits.

5.4 Payment in advance*

- (1) A **retailer** must accept payment in advance from a **customer** on request.
- (2) Acceptance of an advance payment by a **retailer** will not require the **retailer** to credit any interest to the amounts paid in advance.
- (3) Subject to clause 6.9, for the purposes of subclause (1), \$20 is the minimum amount for which ~~the~~ a retailer will accept advance payments unless otherwise agreed with a customer.

5.5 Absence or illness

If a **residential customer** is unable to pay by way of the methods described in clause 5.2, due to illness or absence, a **retailer** must offer the **residential**

customer on request redirection of the **residential customer's** bill to a third person at no charge.

5.6 Late payments

- (1) A **retailer** must not charge a **residential customer** a late payment fee if –
 - (a) the **residential customer** receives a **concession**, provided the **residential customer** did not receive 2 or more **reminder notices** within the previous 12 months; or
 - (b) the **residential customer** and the **retailer** have agreed to –
 - (i) a payment extension under Part 6, and the **residential customer** pays the bill by the agreed (new) due date; or
 - (ii) an **instalment plan** under Part 6, and the **residential customer** is making payments in accordance with the **instalment plan**, or
 - (c) subject to subclause (2), the **residential customer** has made a **complaint** directly related to the non-payment of the bill to the **retailer** or to the **gas ombudsman** and the **complaint** is not **resolved** by the **retailer** or is not determined or is upheld by the **gas ombudsman** (if a complaint has been made to the **gas ombudsman**). If the **complaint** is determined by the **gas ombudsman** in favour of the **retailer**, any late payment fee shall only be calculated from the date of the **gas ombudsman's** decision; or
 - (d) the **residential customer** is assessed by the **retailer** under clause 6.1(1) as being in **financial hardship**.
- (2) ~~Where the~~ **if a retailer** has charged a late payment fee in the circumstances set out in subclause (1)(c) because the **retailer** was not aware of the **complaint**, the **retailer** will not contravene subclause (1)(c) but must refund the late payment fee on the **customer's** next bill.
- (3) If a **retailer** has charged a **residential customer** a late payment fee, the **retailer** must not charge an additional late payment fee in relation to the same bill within 5 **business days** from the date of receipt of the previous late payment fee notice.
- (4) A **retailer** must not charge a **residential customer** more than 3 late payment fees in relation to the same bill or more than 12 late payment fees in a year.
- (5) If a **residential customer** has been assessed as being in **financial hardship pursuant to under** clause 6.1(1), ~~the a~~ **retailer** must retrospectively waive any late payment fee charged ~~pursuant to under~~ the **residential customer's** last bill prior to the assessment being made.

5.7 Vacating a supply address*

- (1) Subject to –
 - (a) Subclauses (2) and (4);
 - (b) ~~the a~~ **customer** giving ~~the a~~ **retailer** notice; and
 - (c) the **customer** vacating the **supply address** at the time specified in the notice,

~~a~~-the **retailer** must not require ~~a~~-the **customer** to pay for gas consumed at the **customer's supply address** from –

(d) the date the **customer** vacated the **supply address**, if the **customer** gave at least 5 days' notice; or

(e) 5 days after the **customer** gave notice, in any other case-.

unless the **retailer** and the **customer** have agreed to an alternative date.

(2) If a **customer** reasonably demonstrates to a **retailer** that the **customer** was evicted or otherwise required to vacate the **supply address**, the **retailer** must not require the **customer** to pay for gas consumed at the **customer's supply address** from the date the **customer** gave the **retailer** notice.

(3) For the purposes of subclauses (1) and (2), notice is given if a **customer** –

(a) informs a **retailer** of the date on which the **customer** intends to vacate, or has vacated the **supply address**; and

(b) gives the **retailer** a forwarding address to which a final bill may be sent.

(4) Notwithstanding subclauses (1) and (2), if –

(a) a **retailer** and a **customer** enter into a new **contract** for the **supply address**, ~~a~~-the **retailer** must not require the previous **customer** to pay for gas consumed at the **customer's supply address** from the date that the new **contract** becomes effective;

(b) another **retailer** becomes responsible for the supply of gas to the **supply address**, the previous **retailer** must not require the **customer** to pay for gas consumed at the **customer's supply address** from the date that the other **retailer** becomes responsible; and

(c) the **supply address** is disconnected, the **retailer** must not require the **customer** to pay for gas consumed at the **customer's supply address** from the date that disconnection occurred.

(5) Notwithstanding subclauses (1), (2) and (4), a **retailer's** right to payment does not terminate with regard to any amount that was due up until the termination of the **contract**.

5.8 Debt collection

(1) A **retailer** must not commence proceedings for recovery of a debt –

(a) from a **residential customer** who has informed the **retailer** in accordance with clause 6.1(1) that the **residential customer** is experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**, unless and until the **retailer** has complied with all the requirements of clause 6.1 and (if applicable) clause 6.3; and

(b) while a **residential customer** continues to make payments under an alternative payment arrangement under Part 6.

(2) A **retailer** must not recover or attempt to recover a debt relating to a **supply address** from a person other than ~~the~~-a **customer** with whom the **retailer** has or had entered into a **contract** for the supply of gas to that **customer's supply address**.

5.9 Debt collection

If a *customer* with a debt owing to a *retailer* requests the *retailer* to transfer the debt to another *customer*, the *retailer* may transfer the debt to the other *customer* provided that the *retailer* obtains the other *customer's verifiable consent* to the transfer.

5.9.5.10 Simultaneous payments for gas and electricity

Where a *retailer* and a *residential customer* have entered into –

- (a) a ***dual fuel contract***, or
 - (b) separate ***contracts*** for the supply of electricity and gas, under which:
 - (i) a single bill for energy is; or
 - (ii) separate, simultaneous bills for electricity and gas are, issued to the *residential customer* and the *residential customer* does not pay the entire amount owing under that bill or those bills,
- the *retailer* must:
- (c) apply a payment received from a *residential customer* for charges for the supply of electricity or gas respectively as agreed between the *retailer* and the *residential customer* in a written agreement; or
 - (d) if no agreement is in place between the *retailer* and the *residential customer*, apply a payment received from the *residential customer* for charges for the supply of electricity or gas respectively as directed by the *residential customer*, or
 - (e) if subclauses (c) and (d) do not apply, apply the payment in proportion to the relative value of each of the charges.

Part 6 Payment Difficulties & Financial Hardship

Division 1 – Assessment of financial situation

6.1 Assessment

- (1) If a **residential customer** informs a **retailer** that the **residential customer** is experiencing **payment problems**, the **retailer** must, (subject to clause 6.2) –
 - (a) within ~~3-5~~ **business days**, assess whether the **residential customer** is experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**; and
 - (b) if the **retailer** cannot make the assessment within ~~3-5~~ **business days**, refer the **residential customer** to ~~an independent financial counsellor or a relevant consumer representative organisation~~ to make the assessment.
- (2) If ~~the a~~ **residential customer** provides ~~the a~~ **retailer** with an assessment from ~~an independent financial counsellor or a relevant consumer representative organisation~~, the **retailer** may adopt that assessment as its own assessment for the purposes of subclause (1)(a).
- (3) When undertaking the assessment required by subclause (1)(a), unless a **retailer** adopts an assessment from ~~an independent financial counsellor or a relevant consumer representative organisation~~, ~~a the~~ **retailer** must give reasonable consideration to –
 - (a) information –
 - (i) given by the **residential customer**; and
 - (ii) requested or held by the **retailer**; or
 - (b) advice given by ~~an independent financial counsellor or a relevant consumer representative organisation~~ (if any).
- (4) A **retailer** must advise a **residential customer** on request of the details and outcome of an assessment carried out under subclause (1).

6.2 Temporary suspension of actions

- (1) If a **retailer** refers a **residential customer** to ~~an independent financial counsellor or a relevant consumer representative organisation~~ under clause 6.1(1)(b) then the **retailer** must grant the **residential customer** a **temporary suspension of actions**.
- (2) If a **residential customer** informs a **retailer** that the **residential customer** is experiencing **payment problems** under clause 6.1, and ~~a the~~ **residential customer** –
 - (a) requests a **temporary suspension of actions**; and
 - (b) demonstrates to ~~a the~~ **retailer** that the **residential customer** has made an appointment with a **relevant consumer representative organisation** to assess the **residential customer's** capacity to pay ~~or provides the retailer with an assessment from an independent financial counsellor or relevant consumer representative organisation~~,

the **retailer** must not unreasonably deny the **residential customer's** request.

- (3) A **temporary suspension of actions** must be for at least 15 **business days**.
- (4) If a **relevant consumer representative organisation** is unable to assess a **residential customer's** capacity to pay within the period referred to in subclause (3) and the **residential customer** or **relevant consumer representative organisation** requests additional time, a **retailer** must give reasonable consideration to the **residential customer's** or **relevant consumer representative's organisation** request.

6.3 Assistance to be offered

- (1) If the assessment carried out under clause 6.1 indicates to ~~the~~ **a retailer** that ~~the~~ **a residential customer** is experiencing –
 - (a) **payment difficulties**, the **retailer** must –
 - (i) offer the **residential customer** the alternative payment arrangements referred to in clause 6.4(1)(a); and
 - (ii) advise the **residential customer** that additional assistance may be available if, due to **financial hardship**, the **residential customer** would be unable to meet its obligations under an agreed alternative payment arrangement; or
 - (b) **financial hardship**, the **retailer** must offer the **residential customer** –
 - (i) the alternative payment arrangements referred to in clause 6.4(1)(b); and
 - (ii) assistance in accordance with clauses 6.6 to 6.9.
- (2) Subclause (1) does not apply if a **retailer** is unable to make an assessment under clause 6.1 as a result of an act or omission by a **residential customer**.

Division 2 – Residential customers experiencing payment difficulties or financial hardship

6.4 Alternative payment arrangements

- (1) A **retailer** must offer a **residential customer** who is experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship** at least the following payment arrangements –
 - (a) if the **residential customer** is experiencing **payment difficulties**:
 - (i) additional time to pay a bill; and
 - (ii) if requested by the **residential customer**, an interest-free and fee-free **instalment plan** or other arrangement under which the **residential customer** is given additional time to pay a bill or to pay arrears (including any disconnection and reconnection charges) and is permitted to continue consumption,
 - (b) if the **residential customer** is experiencing **financial hardship**:
 - (i) additional time to pay a bill; and
 - (ii) an interest-free and fee-free **instalment plan** or other arrangement under which the **residential customer** is given additional time to

pay a bill or to pay arrears (including any disconnection and reconnection charges) and is permitted to continue consumption.

- (2) When offering or amending an **instalment plan**, a **retailer** must –
 - (a) ensure that the **instalment plan** is fair and reasonable taking into account information about ~~the~~ **a residential customer's** capacity to pay and consumption history;
 - (b) comply with subclause (3).
- (3) If ~~the~~ **a residential customer** accepts an **instalment plan** offered by ~~the~~ **a retailer**, the **retailer** must –
 - (a) within 5 **business days** of the **residential customer** accepting the **instalment plan** provide the **residential customer** with information in writing or by **electronic means**:
 - (i) that specifies the terms of **the instalment plan** (including the number and amount of payments, the duration of payments and how the payments are calculated);
 - (ii) the consequences of not adhering to the **instalment plan**; and
 - (iii) the importance of contacting the **retailer** for further assistance if the **residential customer** cannot meet or continue to meet the **instalment plan** terms, and
 - (b) notify the **residential customer** in writing or by **electronic means** of any amendments to the **instalment plan** at least 5 **business days** before they come into effect (unless otherwise agreed with the **residential customer**) and provide the **residential customer** with information in writing or by **electronic means** that clearly explains and assists the **residential customer** to understand those changes.
- (4) If a **residential customer** has, in the previous 12 months, had 2 **instalment plans** cancelled due to non-payment, a **retailer** does not have to offer that **residential customer** another **instalment plan** under subclause (1), unless the **retailer** is satisfied that the **residential customer** will comply with the **instalment plan**.
- (5) For the purposes of subclause (4), cancellation does not include the revision of an **instalment plan** under clause 6.7.

Division 3 – Assistance available to residential customers experiencing financial hardship

6.5 Definitions

In this division –

“customer experiencing financial hardship” means a **residential customer** who has been assessed by a **retailer** under clause 6.1(1) as experiencing **financial hardship**.

Subdivision 1 - Specific assistance available

6.6 Reduction of fees, charges and debt

- (1) A **retailer** must give reasonable consideration to a request by a **customer experiencing financial hardship**, or a **relevant consumer representative organisation**, for a reduction of the **customer's** fees, charges or debt.
- (2) In giving reasonable consideration under subclause (1), a **retailer** should refer to the hardship procedures referred to in clause 6.10(3).

6.7 Revision of alternative payment arrangements

If a **customer experiencing financial hardship**, or a **relevant consumer representative organisation**, reasonably demonstrates to a **retailer** that the **customer** is unable to meet the **customer's** obligations under a previously elected payment arrangement under clause 6.4(1)(b), the **retailer** must give reasonable consideration to –

- (a) offering the **customer** an **instalment plan**, if the **customer** had previously elected a payment extension ~~under clause 6.4(1)~~; or
- (b) offering to revise the **instalment plan**, if the **customer** had previously elected an **instalment plan** ~~under clause 6.4(1)~~.

6.8 Provision of information

A **retailer** must advise a **customer experiencing financial hardship** of the –

- (a) **customer's** right to have the bill redirected at no charge to a third person;
- (b) payment methods available to the **customer**;
- (c) **concessions** available to the **customer** and how to access them;
- (d) different types of tariffs available to the **customer**;
- (e) independent financial counselling services and ~~other relevant consumer representative organisations~~ available to assist the **customer**; and
- (f) availability of any other financial assistance and grants schemes that the **retailer** should reasonably be aware of and how to access them.

6.9 Payment in advance

- (1) A **retailer** must determine the minimum payment in advance amount, as referred to in clause 5.4(3), for **residential customers** experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship** in consultation with **relevant consumer representative organisations**.
- (2) A **retailer** may apply different minimum payment in advance amounts for **residential customers** experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship** and other **customers**.

Subdivision 2 – Hardship policy and hardship procedures

6.10 Obligation to develop hardship policy and hardship procedures

- (1) A **retailer** must develop a hardship policy and hardship procedures to assist **customers experiencing financial hardship** in meeting their financial obligations and responsibilities to the **retailer**.
- (2) The hardship policy must –
 - (a) be developed in consultation with **relevant consumer representatives organisations**;
 - (b) include a statement encouraging **customers** to contact their **retailer** if a **customer** is having trouble paying the **retailer's** bill;
 - (c) include a statement advising that the **retailer** will treat all **customers** sensitively and respectfully;
 - (d) include a statement that the **retailer** may ~~reduce/waive~~ reduce and/or waive fees, charges and debt;
 - (e) include an objective set of hardship indicators;
 - (f) include -
 - (i) an overview of the assistance available to **customers** in **financial hardship** or **payment difficulties** in accordance with Part 6 of the **Compendium** (other than the **retailer's** requirement to advise the **customer** of the ability to pay in advance and the matters referred to in clauses 6.8(a), (b) and (d));
 - (ii) that the **retailer** offers **residential customers** the right to pay their bills by Centrepay; and
 - (iii) a statement that the **retailer** is able to provide further detail ~~upon~~ request;
 - (g) include an overview of any concessions ~~and grants~~ that may be available to the **retailer's customers**;
 - (h) ~~be available in large print copies and~~ include: -
 - (i) the National Interpreter Symbol with the words “Interpreter Services”;
 - (ii) information on the availability of independent multi-lingual services; and
 - (iii) information on the availability of **TTY** services; ~~and~~
 - (i) be available on the **retailer's** website; and
 - (i) be available in large print copies.
- (3) The hardship procedures must –
 - (a) be developed in consultation with **relevant consumer representatives organisations**;
 - (b) provide for the training of staff –
 - (i) including **call centre** staff, all subcontractors employed to engage with **customers experiencing financial hardship**, ~~energy efficiency auditors~~ and field officers;

- (ii) on issues related to **financial hardship** and its impacts, and how to deal sensitively and respectfully with **customers experiencing financial hardship** ~~consistently with the obligation in sub-clause (3)(c);~~
- (c) Not used ~~include guidance on how **customers experiencing financial hardship** are to be treated sensitively and respectfully;~~
- (d) include guidance –
 - (i) that assist the **retailer** in identifying **residential customers** who are experiencing **financial hardship**;
 - (ii) that assist the **retailer** in determining a **residential customer's** usage needs and capacity to pay when determining the conditions of an **instalment plan**;
 - (iii) for suspension of disconnection and debt recovery procedures;
 - (iv) on the reduction and/or waiver of fees, charges and debt; and
 - (v) on the recovery of debt; and
- (e) require that the **retailer's** credit management staff have a direct **telephone** number and that number be provided to ~~relevant financial counsellors and~~ **relevant consumer representative organisations**.
- (4) If requested, a **retailer** must give **residential customers**, ~~financial counsellors~~ and **relevant consumer representative organisations** a copy of the hardship policy, including by post at no charge.
- (5) Not used ~~A **retailer** must keep a record of –~~
 - ~~(a) the **relevant consumer representative organisations** consulted on the contents of the hardship policy and hardship procedures;~~
 - ~~(b) the dates the hardship policy and hardship procedures were established;~~
 - ~~(c) the dates the hardship policy and hardship procedures were reviewed; and~~
 - ~~(d) the dates the hardship policy and hardship procedures were amended.~~
- (6) ~~The **retailer** may, at any time, or must if~~ If directed by the Authority, a **retailer** must review its hardship policy and hardship procedures and submit to the **Authority** the results of that review within 5 **business days** after it is completed.
- (7) ~~The A **retailer**~~ must comply with the **Authority's** Financial Hardship Policy Guidelines.
- (8) If ~~the a **retailer** amends~~ makes a material amendment to the **retailer's** hardship policy, the **retailer** must submit to the **Authority** a copy of the **retailer's** amended hardship policy with 5 **business days** of the amendment.

Division 4 – Business customers experiencing payment difficulties

6.11 Alternative payment arrangements

A **retailer** must consider any reasonable request for alternative payment arrangements from a **business customer** who is experiencing **payment difficulties**.

Part 7 Disconnection

Division 1 – Conduct in relation to disconnection

Subdivision 1 – Disconnection for failure to pay bill

7.1 General requirements

- (1) Prior to arranging for disconnection of ~~the~~ a **customer's supply address** for failure to pay a bill, a **retailer** must –
 - (a) give the **customer** a **reminder notice**, not less than 14 **business days** from the date of dispatch of the bill, including –
 - (i) the **retailer's telephone** number for billing and payment enquiries;
 - (ii) advice on how the **retailer** may assist in the event the **customer** is experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**; and
 - (iii) requiring payment to be made on or before the day not less than 20 **business days** after the day on which the bill was issued;
 - (b) use its best endeavours to **contact** the **customer**; to advise of the proposed disconnection ~~including by telephone or electronic means or other method~~; and
 - (c) give the **customer** a **disconnection warning**, not less than 22 **business days** from the date of dispatch of the bill, advising the **customer** –
 - (i) that the **retailer** may disconnect the **customer** not less than 10 **business days** after the day on which the **disconnection warning** is given; and
 - (ii) of the existence and operation of **complaint** handling processes including the existence and operation of the **gas ombudsman** and the Freecall **telephone** number of the **gas ombudsman**.
- (2) For the purposes of subclause (1), a **customer** has failed to pay a **retailer's** bill if the **customer** has not –
 - (a) paid the **retailer's** bill by the due date;
 - (b) agreed with the **retailer** to an offer of an **instalment plan** or other payment arrangement to pay the **retailer's** bill; or
 - (c) adhered to the **customer's** obligations to make payments in accordance with an agreed **instalment plan** or other payment arrangement relating to the payment of the **retailer's** bill.

7.2 Limitations on disconnection for failure to pay bill

- (1) Notwithstanding clause 7.1, a **retailer** must not arrange for the disconnection of a **customer's supply address** for failure to pay a bill –
 - (a) within 1 **business day** after the expiry of the period referred to in the **disconnection warning**;

- (b) if the **retailer** has made the **residential customer** an offer in accordance with clause 6.4(1) and the **residential customer** has –
 - (i) accepted the offer before the expiry of the period specified by the **retailer** in the **disconnection warning**; and
 - (ii) has used reasonable endeavours to settle the debt before the expiry of the time frame specified by the **retailer** in the **disconnection warning**;
 - (c) if the amount outstanding is less than an amount approved and published by the **Authority** in accordance with subclause (2) and the **customer** has agreed with the **retailer** to repay the amount outstanding;
 - (d) if the **customer** has made an application for a **concession** and a decision on the application has not yet been made;
 - (e) if the **customer** has failed to pay an amount which does not relate to the supply of gas;
 - (f) if the **supply address** does not relate to the bill, ~~(unless the **customer** has failed to make payments relating to an outstanding debt for amount outstanding relates to~~ a **supply address** previously occupied by the **customer**); or
 - (g) where a **residential customer** has been assessed by a **retailer** under clause 6.1(1) as experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**, without the **retailer** having provided the **customer** with information on the types of **concessions** available to the **customer**.
- (2) For the purposes of subclause (1)(c), the **Authority** may approve and publish, in relation to failure to pay a bill, an amount outstanding below which a **retailer** must not arrange for the disconnection of a **customer's supply address**.

7.3 Dual fuel contracts

- (1) If –
 - (a) a **retailer** and a **residential customer** have entered into –
 - (i) a **dual fuel contract**; or
 - (ii) separate **contracts** for the supply of electricity and gas, under which –
 - A. a single bill for energy is; or
 - B. separate, simultaneous bills for electricity and gas are, issued to the **residential customer**; and
 - (b) the **retailer** is permitted to and wishes to arrange for disconnection of the supply of electricity and gas to the **residential customer's supply address** for failure to pay a bill,

the **retailer** must arrange for disconnection of the supply of gas in priority to disconnection of the supply of electricity.

Subdivision 2 – Disconnection for denying access to meter

7.4 General requirements

- (1) A **retailer** must not arrange for the disconnection of a **customer's supply address** for denying access to the **meter**, unless –
- (a) the **customer** has denied access for the purpose of reading the **meter** for the purposes of issuing 3 consecutive bills;
 - (b) the **retailer** has, prior to giving the **customer** a **disconnection warning** under subclause (e), each time it was denied access given the **customer** in writing 5 **business days'** notice –
 - (i) advising the **customer** of the next date or timeframe of a scheduled **meter** reading at the **supply address**;
 - (ii) requesting access to the **meter** at the **supply address** for the purpose of the scheduled **meter** reading; and
 - (iii) advising the **customer** of the **retailer's** ability to arrange for disconnection if the **customer** fails to provide access to the **meter**;
 - (c) the **retailer** has given the **customer** an opportunity to provide reasonable alternative access arrangements;
 - (d) the **retailer** has used its best endeavours to **contact** the **customer** to advise of the proposed disconnection; and
 - (e) the **retailer** has given the **customer** a **disconnection warning** with at least 5 **business days'** notice of its intention to arrange for disconnection.
- (2) A **retailer** may arrange for ~~the~~ a **distributor** to carry out 1 or more of the requirements referred in subclause (1) on behalf of the **retailer**.

Subdivision 3 – Disconnection for emergencies

7.5 General requirements

If a **distributor** disconnects a **customer's supply address** for **emergency** reasons, the **distributor** must –

- (a) provide, by way of a 24 hour emergency line at the cost of a local call (excluding mobile telephones), information on the nature of the **emergency** and an estimate of the time when supply will be restored; and
- (b) use its best endeavours to restore supply to the **customer's supply address** as soon as possible.

Division 2 – Limitations on disconnection

7.6 General limitations on disconnection

- (1) Subject to subclause (3), a **retailer** must not arrange for disconnection of a **customer's supply address** ~~where~~ if:

- (a) a **complaint** has been made to the **retailer** directly related to the reason for the proposed disconnection; or
- (b) the **retailer** is notified by the **distributor, gas ombudsman** or an external dispute resolution body that there is a **complaint**, directly related to the reason for the proposed disconnection, that has been made to the **distributor, gas ombudsman** or external dispute resolution body,

and the **complaint** is not **resolved** by the **retailer** or **distributor** or determined by the **gas ombudsman** or external dispute resolution body.

(2) Subject to subclause (3), a **distributor** must not ~~perform a disconnection of~~ **disconnect** a **customer's supply address** –

(a) ~~where~~if:

- (i) a **complaint** has been made to the **distributor** directly related to the reason for the proposed disconnection; or
- (ii) the **distributor** is notified by ~~the a~~ retailer, the **gas ombudsman** or an external dispute resolution body that there is a **complaint**, directly related to the reason for the proposed disconnection, that has been made to the **retailer, gas ombudsman** or external dispute resolution body,

and the **complaint** is not **resolved** by the **retailer** or **distributor** or determined by the **gas ombudsman** or external dispute resolution body;
or

(b) during any time:

- (i) after 3.00 pm Monday to Thursday; or
- (ii) on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday, **public holiday** or on the **day** before a **public holiday**.

(3) A **retailer** or a **distributor** may arrange for disconnection of a **customer's supply address** if the disconnection—

- (a) was requested by the **customer**;
- (b) was carried out for **emergency reasons**;
- (c) was the result of a planned **interruption**; or
- (d) was to prevent unauthorised utilisation.

Part 8 Reconnection

8.1 Reconnection by retailer*

- (1) If a **retailer** has arranged for disconnection of a **customer's supply address** due to –
- (a) failure to pay a bill, and the **customer** has paid or agreed to accept an offer of an **instalment plan**, or other payment arrangement;
 - (b) the **customer** denying access to the **meter**, and the **customer** has subsequently provided access to the **meter**, or
 - (c) illegal use of gas, and the **customer** has remedied that breach, and has paid, or made an arrangement to pay, for the gas so obtained,
- the **retailer** must arrange for reconnection of the **customer's supply address**, subject to –
- (d) the **customer** making a request for reconnection; and
 - (e) the **customer** –
 - (i) paying the **retailer's** reasonable charge for reconnection, if any; or
 - (ii) accepting an offer of an **instalment plan** for the **retailer's** reasonable charges for reconnection, if any.
- (2) For the purposes of subclause (1), a **retailer** must forward the request for reconnection to the relevant **distributor** –
- (a) that same **business day**, if the request is received before 3pm on a **business day**; or
 - (b) no later than 3pm on the next **business day**, if the request is received –
 - (i) after 3pm on a **business day**, or
 - (ii) on a Saturday, Sunday or **public holiday**.

8.2 Reconnection by distributor

- (1) If a **distributor** has disconnected a **customer's supply address** on request by the **customer's retailer**, and the **retailer** has subsequently requested the **distributor** to reconnect the **customer's supply address**, then, subject to the **retailer** complying with any **retail market rules** applicable to that **retailer**, the **distributor** must reconnect the **customer's supply address**.
- (2) Subject to subclause (3) and for the purposes of subclause (1), a **distributor** must reconnect ~~the a~~ **customer's supply address** within 2 **business days** of receipt of the request.
- (3) Subclause (2) does not apply –
- (a) where ~~the a~~ **retailer** has notified a **distributor** of a later date for reconnection, in which case, subject to this subclause, ~~a the~~ **distributor** must reconnect ~~the a~~ **customer's supply address** within 2 **business days** of that later date;

- (b) in the event of an **emergency**, in which case a **distributor** must reconnect ~~the~~a **customer's supply address** within 2 **business days** of the **emergency** ceasing to exist;
 - (c) if ~~the~~a **distributor's** access to the **supply address** has been restricted, in which case ~~a~~the **distributor** must reconnect ~~the~~a **customer's supply address** within 2 **business days** of becoming aware that access to the **customer's supply address** is unrestricted;
 - (d) if it is unsafe to reconnect the **supply address**, in which case a **distributor** must reconnect ~~the~~a **customer's supply address** within 2 **business days** of becoming aware that the safety issue has been resolved; or
 - (e) if the reconnection requires excavation, in which case a **distributor** must reconnect ~~the~~a **customer's supply address** within 10 **business days** of receipt of the request to reconnect.
- (4) If any of the circumstances described in subclauses (3)(b) to (e) apply, ~~the~~a **distributor** must notify ~~the~~a **retailer** of the relevant circumstance that applies within 2 **business days** of receipt of the reconnection request made under subclause (1).
- (5) Notwithstanding subclause (1), if a **distributor** becomes aware that there has been unauthorised utilisation of gas at ~~the~~a **customer's supply address**, the **distributor** –
- (a) must notify ~~the~~a **retailer** of the unauthorised utilisation as soon as practicable; and
 - (b) is not obliged to reconnect the **customer's supply address** until the issue is resolved.

**Part 9
NOT USED**

[Note – Part 9 is not used to ensure conformity of numbering with the Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers.]

Part 10 Information & Communication
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Division 1 – Obligations particular to retailers

10.1 Tariff information

- (1) A **retailer** must give notice to each of its **customers** affected by a variation in its tariffs ~~as soon as practicable after the variation is published and, in any event,~~ no later than the next bill in a **customer's billing cycle**.
- (2) A **retailer** must give a **customer** on request, at no charge, reasonable information on the **retailer's** tariffs, including any **alternative tariffs** that may be available to that **customer**.
- (3) A **retailer** must give a **customer** the information referred to under subclause (2) within 8 **business days** of the date of receipt. If requested by ~~a~~the **customer**, the **retailer** must give the information in writing.

10.2 Historical billing data

- (1) A **retailer** must give a **customer** on request the **customer's** billing data.
- (2) If a **customer** requests billing data under subclause (1) –
 - (a) for a period less than the previous 2 years and no more than once a year; or
 - (b) in relation to a dispute with ~~the~~a **retailer**,the **retailer** must give the billing data at no charge.
- (3) A **retailer** must give a **customer** the billing data requested under subclause (1) within 10 **business days** of the date of receipt of –
 - (a) the request; or
 - (b) payment for the **retailer's** reasonable charge for providing the billing data (if requested by the **retailer**).
- (4) A **retailer** must keep a **customer's** billing data for 7 years.

10.3 Concessions

A **retailer** must give a **residential customer** on request at no charge –

- (a) information on the types of **concessions** available to the **residential customer**, and
- (b) the name and contact details of the organisation responsible for administering those **concessions** (if the **retailer** is not responsible).

10.4 Energy efficiency advice

A **retailer** must give or make available to, a **customer** on request, at no charge, general information on –

- (a) cost effective and efficient ways to utilise gas (including referring ~~a~~ the **customer** to a relevant information source); and
- (b) the typical running costs of major domestic appliances.

10.5 Distribution matters

If a **customer** asks a **retailer** for information relating to the distribution of gas, the **retailer** must –

- (a) give the information to the **customer**; or
- (b) if the **retailer** cannot practicably provide the information to the **customer**, refer the **customer** to the relevant **distributor** for a response.

10.5A Gas customer safety awareness programme

- (1) A **retailer** must, within 3 months of being subject to this **Compendium**, lodge with the **Authority** a **gas customer safety awareness programme** in accordance with subclause (3).
- (2) A **retailer** must consult with the **Authority** when preparing the **gas customer safety awareness programme**.
- (3) A **gas customer safety awareness programme** is to communicate information to **customers** regarding safety in the use of gas and must address, at a minimum, provision of the following information to **customers**:
 - (a) information on the properties of gas relevant to its use by **customers**;
 - (b) a notice of the requirement for proper installation and use of approved appliances and equipment;
 - (c) a notice of the requirement to use only qualified trade persons for gas connection and appliance and equipment installation;
 - (d) the proper procedure for the reporting of gas leaks or appliance or equipment defects; and
 - (e) safety procedures to be followed and the appropriate **telephone** number to call in case of **emergency**.

Division 2 – Obligations particular to distributors

10.6 General information

A **distributor** must –

- (a) give a **customer** on request, at no charge; or
- (b) direct the **customer** to a person or class of persons who can provide, the following information –
 - (c) information on the **distributor's** requirements in relation to the **customer's** proposed new gas installation, or changes to the

customer's existing gas installation, including advice about supply extensions;

- (d) an explanation for any unplanned **interruption** of supply to the **customer's supply address**;
- (e) advice on facilities required to protect the **distributor's** equipment;
- (f) advice on how to obtain information on protecting the **customer's** equipment;
- (g) advice on the **customer's** gas usage so that it does not interfere with the operation of a distribution system;
- (h) general information on quality of supply; and
- (i) general information on reliability of supply.

10.7 NOT USED

10.8 NOT USED

Division 3 – Obligations particular to retailers and distributors

10.9 Written information must be easy to understand

To the extent practicable, a **retailer** and **distributor** must ensure that any written information that must be given to a **customer** by the **gas marketing agent, retailer or distributor** under the **Gas Marketing Code** and the **Compendium** is expressed in clear, simple and concise language and is in a format that makes it easy to understand.

10.10 Gas Marketing Code and Compendium

(1) A **retailer** must –

- (a) advise a **customer** on request how the **customer** can obtain a copy of the **Gas Marketing Code** and the **Compendium**; and
- (b) make electronic copies of the **Gas Marketing Code** and the **Compendium** available, at no charge, on the **retailer's** website; ~~and~~
- (c) Not used ~~make a copy of the **Gas Marketing Code** and the **Compendium** available for inspection at the offices of the **retailer** at no charge.~~

(2) A **distributor** must –

- (a) advise a **customer** on request how the **customer** can obtain a copy of the **Compendium**; and
- (b) make electronic copies of the **Compendium** available, at no charge, on the **distributor's** website; ~~and~~
- (c) Not used ~~make a copy of the **Compendium** available for inspection at the offices of the **distributor** at no charge.~~

10.11 Special Information Needs

- (1) A **retailer** and a **distributor** must make available to a **residential customer** on request, at no charge, services that assist the **residential customer** in interpreting information provided by the **retailer** or **distributor** to the **residential customer** (including independent multi-lingual and **TTY** services, and large print copies).
- (2) A **retailer** and, ~~where~~ if appropriate, a **distributor** must include in relation to **residential customers** –
 - (a) the **telephone** number for its **TTY** services;
 - (b) the **telephone** number for independent multi-lingual services; and
 - (c) the telephone number for interpreter services together with the **National Interpreter Symbol** ~~with~~ and the words “Interpreter Services”,
on the –
 - (d) bill and bill related information (including, for example, the notice referred to in clause 4.2~~(5)~~(3) and statements relating to an **instalment plan**);
 - (e) **reminder notice**; and
 - (f) **disconnection warning**.

10.12 NOT USED

**Part 11
NOT USED**

[Note – Part 11 is not used to ensure conformity of numbering with the Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers.]

Part 12

Complaints & Dispute Resolution

12.1 Obligation to establish complaints handling process

- (1) A **retailer** and **distributor** must develop, maintain and implement an internal process for handling **complaints** and resolving disputes.
- (2) The **complaints** handling process under subclause (1) must –
 - (a) comply with **Australian Standard** [AS/NZS 10002:2014](#)~~AS ISO 10002-2006~~;
 - (b) address at least –
 - (i) how **complaints** must be lodged by **customers**;
 - (ii) how **complaints** will be handled by ~~the~~a **retailer** or **distributor** including –
 - A. a right of ~~the~~a **customer** to have its **complaint** considered by a senior employee within each organisation of the **retailer** or **distributor** if the **customer** is not satisfied with the manner in which the **complaint** is being handled;
 - B. the information that will be provided to a **customer**;
 - (iii) response times for **complaints**; and
 - (iv) method of response; and
 - (c) detail how ~~the~~a **retailer** will handle **complaints** about the **retailer**, **gas marketing agents** or **marketing**; and
 - (d) be available at no cost to **customers**.
- (3) For the purposes of subclause (2)(b)(ii)(B), a **retailer** or **distributor** must at least –
 - (a) when responding to a ~~customer~~**complaint**, advise the **customer** that the **customer** has the right to have the **complaint** considered by a senior employee within the **retailer** or **distributor** (in accordance with its **complaints** handling process); and
 - (b) when a **complaint** has not been **resolved** internally in a manner acceptable to ~~the~~a **customer**, advise the **customer** –
 - (i) of the reasons for the outcome (on request, the **retailer** or **distributor** must supply such reasons in writing); and
 - (ii) that the **customer** has the right to raise the **complaint** with the **gas ombudsman** or another relevant external dispute resolution body and provide the Freecall **telephone** number of the **gas ombudsman**.
- (4) For the purpose of subclause (2)(b)(iii), a **retailer** or **distributor** must, on receipt of a written **complaint** by a **customer** –
 - (a) acknowledge the **complaint** within 10 **business days**; and
 - (b) respond to the **complaint** by addressing the matters in the **complaint** within 20 **business days**.

12.2 Obligation to comply with a guideline that distinguishes customer queries from ~~customer~~ complaints

A *retailer* must comply with any guideline developed by the *Authority* relating to distinguishing *customer* queries from ~~customer~~ complaints.

12.3 Information provision

A *retailer*, *distributor* and *gas marketing agent* must give a *customer* on request, at no charge, information that will assist the *customer* in utilising the respective *complaints* handling processes.

12.4 Obligation to refer complaint

When a *retailer*, *distributor* or *gas marketing agent* receives a *complaint* that does not relate to its functions, it must advise the *customer* of the entity that the *retailer*, *distributor* or *gas marketing agent* reasonably considers to be the appropriate entity to deal with the *complaint* (if known).

Part 13 Reporting

13.1 Preparation of an annual report ~~by retailers and distributors~~

A *retailer* and a *distributor* must prepare a report in respect of each *reporting year* setting out the information specified by the Authority.

13.2 Provision of annual report to the Authority ~~by retailers and distributors~~

A report referred to in clause 13.1 must be provided to the *Authority* by the date, and in the matter and form, specified by the *Authority*.

13.3 Publication of reports ~~by retailers and distributors~~

- (1) A report referred to in clause 13.1 must be published by the date specified by the *Authority*.
- (2) A report is published for the purposes of subclause (1) if –
 - (a) copies of it are available to the public, without cost, at places where the *retailer* or *distributor* transacts business with the public; and
 - (b) a copy of it is posted on an internet website maintained by the *retailer* or *distributor*.

**Part 14
NOT USED**

[Note – Part 14 is not used to ensure conformity of numbering with the Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers.]

Appendix 2 Amended Compendium of Gas Customer Licence Obligations (clean)

Schedule 2

***Compendium of Gas Customer Licence
Obligations***

(Compendium)

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Part 1 Preliminary

1.1 Commencement of Schedule 2

The obligations in this Schedule 2 apply to the **retailer** and **distributor** (as the case may be) on and from 1 January 2017.

1.2 Interpretation of Schedule 2

- (1) Headings and notes are for convenience or information only and do not affect the interpretation of the conditions in this Schedule 2 or of any term or condition set out in this Schedule 2.
- (2) An expression imparting a natural person includes any company, partnership, trust, joint venture, association, corporation or other body corporate and any governmental agency and vice versa.
- (3) A reference to a document or a provision of a document includes an amendment or supplement to, or replacement of or novation of, that document or that provision of that document.
- (4) A reference to a person includes that person's executors, administrators, successors, substitutes (including, without limitation, persons taking by novation) and permitted assigns.
- (5) Other parts of speech and grammatical forms of a word or phrase defined in this Schedule 2 have a corresponding meaning.
- (6) The definitions in Schedule 2 only apply to the terms and conditions in Schedule 2 of this licence and will not apply to any of the other parts of this licence.
- (7) Where clause 2 of the licence:
 - (a) authorises the licensee to sell gas transported through a distribution system to **customers**, a reference to a **retailer** in this Schedule 2 is a reference to the licensee (as defined in clause 1 of the main body of the licence);
 - (b) authorises the licensee to:
 - (i) construct, alter or operate a distribution system; or
 - (ii) transport gas through a distribution system,a reference to a **distributor** in this Schedule 2 is a reference to the licensee (as defined in clause 1 of the main body of the licence).

1.3 Definitions for Schedule 2

In this Schedule 2, unless the contrary intention appears –

“Act” means the *Energy Coordination Act 1994*.

“adjustment” means the difference in the amount charged –

- (a) in a bill or series of bills based on an estimate carried out in accordance with clause 4.8; or

- (b) under a bill smoothing arrangement based on an estimate carried out in accordance with clause 4.3(2)(a)-(b),

and the amount to be charged as a result of a bill being determined in accordance with clause 4.6(1)(a) provided that the difference is not as a result of a defect, error or default for which the **retailer** or **distributor** is responsible or contributed to.

“**alternative tariff**” means a tariff other than the tariff under which the **customer** is currently supplied gas.

“**Australian Standard**” means a standard published by Standards Australia.

“**Authority**” means the Economic Regulation Authority established under the *Economic Regulation Authority Act 2003*.

“**basic living needs**” includes –

- (a) rent or mortgage;
- (b) other utilities (e.g., electricity, phone and water);
- (c) food and groceries;
- (d) transport (including petrol and car expenses);
- (e) childcare and school fees;
- (f) clothing; and
- (g) medical and dental expenses.

“**billing cycle**” means the regular recurrent period in which a **customer** receives a bill from a **retailer**.

“**business customer**” means a **customer** who is not a **residential customer**.

“**business day**” means any day except a Saturday, Sunday or **public holiday**.

“**call centre**” means a dedicated centre that has the purpose of receiving and transmitting **telephone** calls in relation to customer service operations of the **retailer** or **distributor**, as relevant, and consists of call centre staff and 1 or more information technology and communications systems designed to handle customer service calls and record call centre performance information.

“**change in personal circumstances**” includes –

- (a) sudden and unexpected disability, illness of or injury to the **residential customer** or a dependant of the **residential customer**;
- (b) loss of or damage to property of the **residential customer**; or
- (c) other similar unforeseeable circumstances arising as a result of events beyond the control of the **residential customer**.

“**Compendium**” means this Schedule 2 titled *Compendium of Gas Customer Licence Obligations (Compendium)*.

“**collective customer**” means a **customer** -

- (a) who receives a single bill from the **retailer** for gas supplied at two or more **supply addresses**; or
- (b) who is supplied gas from the same **retailer** at multiple sites at a single **supply address**.

“**complaint**” means an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a

complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

“**concession**” means a concession, rebate, subsidy or grant related to the supply of gas available to **residential customers** only.

“**contact**” means contact that is face to face, by **telephone** or by post, facsimile or **electronic means**.

“**contract**” means a **standard form contract** or a **non-standard contract**.

“**customer**” means a customer whose consumption of gas is less than 1 terajoule per year.

“**direct debit facility**” means a facility offered by a **retailer** to automatically deduct a payment from a **customer’s** nominated account and entered into with a **customer** in accordance with clause 5.3.

“**disconnection warning**” means a notice in writing issued in accordance with clause 7.1(1)(c) or clause 7.4(1).

“**distributor**” means a person who holds a distribution licence under Part 2A of the **Act**.

“**dual fuel contract**” means a **contract** for the sale of electricity and for the sale of gas by a **retailer** to a **customer**.

“**electronic means**” means the internet, email, facsimile, SMS or other similar means but does not include **telephone**.

“**emergency**” means an emergency due to the actual or imminent occurrence of an event which in any way endangers or threatens to endanger the safety or health of any person in Western Australia or which destroys or damages, or threatens to destroy or damage, any property in Western Australia.

“**financial hardship**” means a state of more than immediate financial disadvantage which results in a **residential customer** being unable to pay an outstanding amount as required by a **retailer** without affecting the ability to meet the **basic living needs** of the **residential customer** or a dependant of the **residential customer**.

“**gas customer safety awareness programme**” means a programme to communicate information to **customers** regarding safety in the use of gas and must address, at a minimum, provision of the following information to **customers** –

- (a) information on the properties of gas relevant to its use by **customers**;
- (b) a notice of the requirement for proper installation and use of approved appliances and equipment;
- (c) a notice of the requirement to use only qualified trade persons for gas connection and appliance and equipment installation;
- (d) the proper procedure for the reporting of gas leaks or appliance or equipment defects; and
- (e) safety procedures to be followed and the appropriate **telephone** number to call in case of **emergency**.

“**gas marketing agent**” has the meaning given to that term in the **Gas Marketing Code**.

“**Gas Marketing Code**” means the *Gas Marketing Code of Conduct 2015*, as amended or repealed and replaced by the Authority under Part C of the Act.

“gas ombudsman” means the ombudsman appointed under the scheme approved by the **Authority** pursuant to section 11ZPZ of the **Act**.

[Note: The Energy and Water Ombudsman Western Australia is the **gas ombudsman** appointed under the scheme approved by the **Authority** pursuant to section 11ZPZ of the **Act**.]

“historical debt” means an amount outstanding for the supply of gas by a **retailer** to a **customer’s** previous **supply address** or **supply addresses**.

“instalment plan” means an arrangement between a **retailer** and a **customer** to assist the **customer** to remain connected, reduce its arrears and minimise the risk of the **customer** getting into further debt where the **customer** pays in arrears or in advance and continued usage on its account according to an agreed payment schedule (generally involving payment of at least 3 instalments) taking into account the **customer’s** capacity to pay. It does not include **customers** using an instalment plan as a matter of convenience or for flexible budgeting purposes.

“interruption” means the temporary unavailability of supply from the distribution system to a **customer**, but does not include disconnection under Part 7.

“marketing” includes engaging or attempting to engage in any of the following activities by any means, including door to door or by **telephone** or other **electronic means** –

- (a) negotiations for, or dealings in respect of, a **contract** for the supply of gas to a **customer**, or
- (b) advertising, promotion, market research or public relations in relation to the supply of gas to **customers**.

“meter” means an instrument that measures the quantity of gas passing through it and includes associated equipment attached to the instrument to filter, control or regulate the flow of gas.

“metering agent” means a person responsible for reading the **meter** on behalf of the **distributor**.

“National Interpreter Symbol” means the national public information symbol “Interpreter Symbol” (with text) developed by Victoria in partnership with the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments in accordance with **Australian Standard** 2342.

“non-standard contract” means a contract entered into between a **retailer** and a **customer**, or a class of **customers**, that is not a **standard form contract**.

“overcharging” means the amount by which the amount charged in a bill or under a bill smoothing arrangement is greater than the amount that would have been charged if the amount of the bill was determined in accordance with clause 4.6(1)(a) as a result of some defect, error or default for which the **retailer** or **distributor** is responsible or contributed to, but does not include an **adjustment**.

“payment difficulties” means a state of immediate financial disadvantage that results in a **residential customer** being unable to pay an outstanding amount as required by a **retailer** by reason of a **change in personal circumstances**.

“payment problems” includes, without limitation, payment problems relating to **historical debt**.

“**premises**” means premises owned or occupied by a new or existing **customer**.

“**pre-payment meter**” means a **meter** that requires a **customer** to pay for the supply of gas prior to consumption.

“**public holiday**” means a public holiday in Western Australia.

“**relevant consumer representative**” means a person who may reasonably be expected to represent the interests of **residential customers** who are experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**, and includes financial counsellors.

“**reminder notice**” means a notice in writing issued in accordance with clause 7.1(1)(a).

“**reporting year**” means a year commencing on 1 July and ending on 30 June.

“**residential customer**” means a **customer** who consumes gas solely for domestic use.

“**resolved**” means the decision or determination made by the **retailer** or **distributor** (as relevant) with respect to the **complaint**, where the **retailer** or **distributor**, having regard to the nature and particular circumstances of the **complaint**, has used all reasonable steps to ensure the best possible approach to addressing the **complaint**.

“**retail market rules**” means the *Retail Market Rules* published by the Retail Energy Market Company Limited as amended from time to time.

“**retailer**” means a person who holds a trading licence under Part 2A of the **Act**.

“**standard form contract**” means a contract that is approved by the **Authority** under section 11WF of the **Act**.

“**supply address**” means the **premises** to which gas was, is or may be supplied under a **contract**.

“**telephone**” means a device which is used to transmit and receive voice frequency signals.

“**temporary suspension of actions**” means a situation where a **retailer** temporarily suspends all disconnection and debt recovery procedures without entering into an alternative payment arrangement under clause 6.4(1).

“**TTY**” means a teletypewriter.

“**undercharging**” includes, without limitation –

- (a) the failure to issue a bill in accordance with clause 4.1 or clause 4.2 or to issue a bill under a bill smoothing arrangement; or
- (b) the amount by which the amount charged in a bill or under a bill smoothing arrangement is less than the amount that would have been charged if the amount of the bill was determined in accordance with clause 4.6(1)(a) as a result of some defect, error or default for which the **retailer** or **distributor** is responsible or contributed to, but does not include an **adjustment**.

“**verifiable consent**” means consent that is given –

- (a) expressly;
- (b) in writing or orally;

- (c) after the **gas marketing agent** or **retailer** (whichever is relevant) has in plain language appropriate to that **customer** disclosed all matters materially relevant to the giving of the consent, including each specific purpose for which the consent will be used; and
- (d) by the **customer** or a nominated person competent to give consent on the **customer's** behalf.

1.4 Variation from the Compendium

The following clauses (marked with an asterisk throughout) will not apply to a **retailer** where the **retailer** has entered into a **non-standard contract** with a **customer** and the **retailer** and **customer** agree that the clauses will not apply.

- (a) 4.1;
- (b) 4.2;
- (c) 5.1;
- (d) 5.2;
- (e) 5.4;
- (f) 5.7; and
- (g) 8.1.

1.5 Gas marketing agents

A **retailer** must ensure that any **gas marketing agent** engaged by the **retailer** complies with the obligations under this Schedule 2.

**Part 2
NOT USED**

[Note – Part 2 is not used to ensure conformity of numbering with the Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers.]

[Obligations relating to the marketing of gas to small use customers are addressed in the Gas Marketing Code.]

Part 3 Connection

3.1 Obligation to forward connection application

- (1) If a **retailer** agrees to sell gas to a **customer** or arrange for the connection of the **customer's supply address**, the **retailer** must forward the **customer's** request for connection to the relevant **distributor** for the purpose of arranging for the connection of the **customer's supply address** (if the **customer's supply address** is not already connected).
- (2) Unless the **customer** agrees otherwise, a **retailer** must forward the **customer's** request for connection to the relevant **distributor** –
 - (a) that same day, if the request is received before 3pm on a **business day**; or
 - (b) the next **business day**, if the request is received after 3pm or on a Saturday, Sunday or **public holiday**.
- (3) In this clause –

“customer” includes a **customer's** nominated representative.

Part 4 Billing

Division 1 – Billing cycles

4.1 Billing cycle*

A **retailer** must issue a bill –

- (a) no more than once a month, unless the **retailer** has –
 - (i) obtained a **customer's verifiable consent** to issue bills more frequently;
 - (ii) given the **customer** –
 - A. a **reminder notice** in respect of 3 consecutive bills; and
 - B. notice as contemplated under clause 4.2; or
 - (iii) received a request from the **customer** to change their **supply address** or issue a final bill, in which case the **retailer** may issue a bill more than once a month for the purposes of facilitating the request; and
- (b) at least every 105 days unless –
 - (i) the **retailer** has obtained the **customer's verifiable consent** to issue bills less frequently;
 - (ii) the **customer** has a **pre-payment meter** installed at the **customer's supply address**;
 - (iii) the **retailer** has not received the required metering data from the **distributor** for the purposes of preparing the bill, despite using best endeavours to obtain the metering data from the **distributor**; or
 - (iv) the **retailer** is unable to comply with this timeframe due to the actions of the **customer** where the **customer** is supplied under a deemed contract pursuant to section 11WK of the **Act** and the bill is the first bill issued to that **customer** at that **supply address**.

4.2 Shortened billing cycle*

- (1) For the purposes of clause 4.1(a)(ii), a **retailer** has given a **customer** notice if the **retailer** has advised the **customer**, prior to placing the **customer** on a shortened **billing cycle**, that –
 - (a) receipt of a third **reminder notice** may result in the **customer** being placed on a shortened **billing cycle**;
 - (b) if the **customer** is a **residential customer**, assistance is available for **residential customers** experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**;

- (c) the **customer** may obtain further information from the **retailer** on a specified **telephone** number; and
 - (d) once on a shortened **billing cycle**, the **customer** must pay 3 consecutive bills by the due date to return to the **customer's** previous **billing cycle**.
- (2) Notwithstanding clause 4.1(a)(ii), a **retailer** must not place a **residential customer** on a shortened **billing cycle** without the **customer's verifiable consent** if –
- (a) the **residential customer** informs the **retailer** that the **residential customer** is experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**; and
 - (b) the assessment carried out under clause 6.1 indicates to the **retailer** that the **customer** is experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**.
- (3) If, after giving notice as required under clause 4.1(a)(ii), a **retailer** decides to shorten the **billing cycle** in respect of a **customer**, the **retailer** must give the **customer** written notice of that decision within 10 **business days** of making that decision.
- (4) A shortened **billing cycle** must be at least 10 **business days**.
- (5) A **retailer** must return a **customer**, who is subject to a shortened **billing cycle** and has paid 3 consecutive bills by the due date, on request, to the **billing cycle** that applied to the **customer** before the shortened **billing cycle** commenced.
- (6) A **retailer** must inform a **customer**, who is subject to a shortened **billing cycle**, at least once every 3 months that, if the **customer** pays 3 consecutive bills by the due date of each bill, the **customer** will be returned, on request, to the **billing cycle** that applied to the **customer** before the shortened **billing cycle** commenced.

4.3 Bill smoothing

- (1) Notwithstanding clause 4.1, in respect of any 12 month period, on receipt of a request by a **customer**, a **retailer** may provide the **customer** with a bill which reflects a bill smoothing arrangement.
- (2) If a **retailer** provides a **customer** with a bill under a bill smoothing arrangement pursuant to subclause (1), the **retailer** must ensure that –
- (a) the amount payable under each bill is initially the same and is set out on the basis of –
 - (i) the **retailer's** initial estimate of the amount of gas the **customer** will consume over the 12 month period;
 - (ii) the relevant supply charge for the consumption and any other charges related to the supply of gas agreed with the **customer**;
 - (iii) any **adjustment** from a previous bill smoothing arrangement (after being adjusted in accordance with clause 4.19); and
 - (iv) any other relevant information provided by the **customer**.
 - (b) the initial estimate is based on the **customer's** historical billing data or, where the **retailer** does not have that data, the likely average

consumption at the relevant tariff calculated over the 12 month period as estimated by the **retailer**;

- (c) in or before the seventh month –
 - (i) the **retailer** re-estimates the amount under subclause (2)(a)(i), taking into account any **meter** readings and relevant seasonal and other factors agreed with the **customer**; and
 - (ii) unless otherwise agreed if there is a difference between the initial estimate and the re-estimate of greater than 10%, the amount payable under each of the remaining bills in the 12 month period is to be re-set to reflect that difference; and
- (d) at the end of the 12 month period, or any other time agreed between the **retailer** and the **customer** and at the end of the bill smoothing arrangement, the **meter** is read and any **adjustment** is included on the next bill in accordance with clause 4.19; and
- (e) the **retailer** has obtained the **customer's verifiable consent** to the **retailer** billing on that basis.

4.4 How bills are issued

A **retailer** must issue a bill to a **customer** at the address nominated by the **customer**, which may be an email address.

Division 2 - Contents of a Bill

4.5 Particulars on each bill

- (1) Unless a **customer** agrees otherwise, a **retailer** must include at least the following information on the **customer's** bill –
 - (a) either the range of dates of the metering supply period or the date of the current **meter** reading or estimate;
 - (b) the current **meter** reading or estimate;
 - (c) the **customer's** consumption, or estimated consumption;
 - (d) the number of days covered by the bill;
 - (e) the dates on which the account period begins and ends, if different from the range of dates of the metering supply period or the range of dates of the metering supply period have not been included on the bill already;
 - (f) the applicable tariffs;
 - (g) the amount of any other fees or charges and details of the service provided;
 - (h) with respect to a **residential customer**, a statement that the **residential customer** may be eligible to receive **concessions** and how the **residential customer** may find out its eligibility for those **concessions**;
 - (i) if applicable, the value and type of any **concessions** provided to the **residential customer** that are administered by the **retailer**;
 - (j) if applicable, a statement on the bill that an additional fee may be imposed to cover the costs of late payment from the **customer**;

- (k) the average daily cost of consumption, including charges ancillary to the consumption of gas, unless the **customer** is a **collective customer**;
 - (l) the average daily consumption, unless the **customer** is a **collective customer**;
 - (m) a **meter** identification number (clearly placed on the part of the bill that is retained by the **customer**);
 - (n) the amount due;
 - (o) the due date;
 - (p) a summary of the payment methods;
 - (q) a statement advising the **customer** that assistance is available if the **customer** is experiencing problems paying the bill;
 - (r) a **telephone** number for billing and payment enquiries;
 - (s) a **telephone** number for **complaints**;
 - (t) the contact details for the **gas ombudsman**;
 - (u) the **distributor's** 24 hour **telephone** number for faults and **emergencies**;
 - (v) the **supply address** and any relevant mailing address;
 - (w) the **customer's** name and account number;
 - (x) the amount of arrears or credit;
 - (y) if applicable and not included on a separate statement –
 - (i) payments made under an **instalment plan**; and
 - (ii) the total amount outstanding under the **instalment plan**;
 - (z) with respect to **residential customers**, the **telephone** number for interpreter services together with the **National Interpreter Symbol** and the words "Interpreter Services";
 - (aa) the **telephone** number for **TTY** services;
 - (bb) to the extent that the data is available, a graph or bar chart illustrating the **customer's** amount due or consumption for the period covered by the bill, the previous bill and the bill for the same period last year; and
 - (cc) the Meter Installation Registration Number for the property.
- (2) Notwithstanding subclause (1)(bb), a **retailer** is not obliged to include a graph or bar chart on the bill if the bill is –
- (a) not indicative of a **customer's** actual consumption;
 - (b) not based upon a **meter** reading; or
 - (c) for a **collective customer**.
- (3) If a **retailer** identifies a **historical debt** and wishes to bill a **customer** for that **historical debt**, the **retailer** must advise the **customer** of –
- (a) the amount of the **historical debt**; and
 - (b) the basis of the **historical debt**,
- before, with, or on the **customer's** next bill.

Division 3 - Basis of Bill

4.6 Basis of bill

- (1) Subject to clause 4.8, a **retailer** must base a **customer's** bill on –
 - (a) the **distributor's** or **metering agent's** reading of the **meter** at the **customer's supply address**; or
 - (b) the **customer's** reading of the **meter** at the **customer's supply address**, provided the **retailer** requested and the **customer** agreed that the **customer** will read the **meter** for the purpose of determining the amount due.

4.7 Frequency of meter readings

- (1) A **retailer** must use its best endeavours to ensure that metering data is obtained as frequently as required to prepare its bills.
- (2) A **retailer** must ensure that at least once every 12 months it obtains metering data in accordance with clause 4.6(1)(a).

4.8 Estimations

- (1) If a **retailer** is unable to reasonably base a bill on a reading of the **meter** at a **customer's supply address**, the **retailer** must give the **customer** an estimated bill.
- (2) If a **retailer** bases a bill upon an estimation, the **retailer** must clearly specify on the **customer's** bill that –
 - (a) the **retailer** has based the bill upon an estimation;
 - (b) the **retailer** will tell the **customer** on request –
 - (i) the basis of the estimation; and
 - (ii) the reason for the estimation; and
 - (c) the **customer** may request –
 - (i) a verification of an estimation; and
 - (ii) a **meter** reading.
- (3) A **retailer** must tell a **customer** on request the –
 - (a) basis for the estimation; and
 - (b) reason for the estimation.

4.9 Adjustments to subsequent bills

If a **retailer** gives a **customer** an estimated bill and the **meter** is subsequently read, the **retailer** must include an **adjustment** on the next bill to take account of the actual **meter** reading in accordance with clause 4.19.

4.10 Customer may request meter reading

If a **retailer** has based a bill upon an estimation because a **customer** failed to provide access to the **meter** and the **customer** –

- (a) subsequently requests the **retailer** to replace the estimated bill with a bill based on an actual reading of the **customer's meter**;
 - (b) pays the **retailer's** reasonable charge for reading the **meter** (if any); and
 - (c) provides due access to the **meter**,
- the **retailer** must do so.

Division 4 – Meter testing

4.11 Customer requests testing of meters or metering data

- (1) If a **customer** –
 - (a) requests the **meter** to be tested; and
 - (b) pays the **retailer's** reasonable charge for testing the **meter** (if any),the **retailer** must request the **distributor** or **metering agent** to test the **meter**.
- (2) If the **meter** is tested and found to be defective, the **retailer's** reasonable charge for testing the **meter** (if any) is to be refunded to the **customer**.

Division 5 – Alternative Tariffs

4.12 Customer applications

- (1) If a **retailer** offers **alternative tariffs** and a **customer** –
 - (a) applies to receive an **alternative tariff**, and
 - (b) demonstrates to the **retailer** that the **customer** satisfies all of the conditions relating to eligibility for the **alternative tariff**,the **retailer** must change the **customer** to the **alternative tariff** within 10 **business days** of the **customer** satisfying those conditions.
- (2) For the purposes of subclause (1), the effective date of change will be –
 - (a) the date on which the last **meter** reading at the previous tariff is obtained; or
 - (b) the date the **meter** adjustment is completed, if the change requires an adjustment to the **meter** at the **customer's supply address**.

4.13 Written notification of a change to an alternative tariff

If –

- (a) a **customer's** gas use at the **customer's supply address** changes or has changed; and
- (b) the **customer** is no longer eligible to continue to receive an existing, more beneficial tariff,

a **retailer** must, prior to changing the **customer** to the tariff applicable to the **customer's** use of gas at that **supply address**, give the **customer** written notice of the proposed change.

Division 6 – Final bill

4.14 Request for final bill

- (1) If a **customer** requests a **retailer** to issue a final bill at the **customer's supply address**, the **retailer** must use reasonable endeavours to arrange for that bill in accordance with the **customer's** request.
- (2) If a **customer's** account is in credit at the time of account closure, subject to subclause (3), a **retailer** must, at the time of the final bill, ask the **customer** for instructions whether the **customer** requires the **retailer** to transfer the amount of credit to:
 - (a) another account the **customer** has, or will have, with the **retailer**; or
 - (b) a bank account nominated by the **customer**; andthe **retailer** must credit the account, or pay the amount of credit in accordance with the **customer's** instructions, within 12 **business days** of receiving the instructions or other such time as agreed with the **customer**.
- (3) If a **customer's** account is in credit at the time of account closure, and the **customer** owes a debt to a **retailer**, the **retailer** may, with written notice to the **customer**, use that credit to set off the debt owed to the **retailer**. If, after the set off, there remains an amount of credit, the **retailer** must ask the **customer** for instructions to transfer the remaining amount of credit in accordance with subclause (2).

Division 7 – Review of bill

4.15 Review of bill

Subject to a **customer** –

- (a) paying –
 - (i) that portion of the bill under review that the **customer** and a **retailer** agree is not in dispute; or
 - (ii) an amount equal to the average amount of the **customer's** bills over the previous 12 months (excluding the bill in dispute),whichever is less; and
 - (b) paying any future bills that are properly due,
- a **retailer** must review the **customer's** bill on request by the **customer**.

4.16 Procedures following a review of a bill

- (1) If, after conducting a review of a bill, a **retailer** is satisfied that the bill is –
 - (a) correct, the **retailer** –

- (i) may require a **customer** to pay the unpaid amount;
 - (ii) must advise the **customer** that the **customer** may request the **retailer** to arrange a **meter** test in accordance with applicable law; and
 - (iii) must advise the **customer** of the existence and operation of the **retailer's** internal **complaints** handling processes and details of any applicable external **complaints** handling processes,
- or
- (b) incorrect, the **retailer** must adjust the bill in accordance with clauses 4.17 and 4.18.
- (2) A **retailer** must inform a **customer** of the outcome of the review as soon as practicable.
 - (3) If a **retailer** has not informed a **customer** of the outcome of the review within 20 **business days** from the date of receipt of the request for review under clause 4.15, the **retailer** must provide the **customer** with notification of the status of the review as soon as practicable.

Division 8 – Undercharging, overcharging and adjustment

4.17 Undercharging

- (1) This clause 4.17 applies whether the **undercharging** became apparent through a review under clause 4.15 or otherwise.
- (2) If a **retailer** proposes to recover an amount **undercharged** as a result of an error, defect or default for which the **retailer** or **distributor** is responsible (including where a **meter** has been found to be defective), the **retailer** must –
 - (a) subject to subclause (b), limit the amount to be recovered to no more than the amount **undercharged** in the 12 months prior to the date on which the **retailer** notified the **customer** that **undercharging** had occurred;
 - (b) other than in the event that the information provided by a **customer** is incorrect, if a **retailer** has changed the **customer** to an **alternative tariff** in the circumstances set out in clause 4.13 and, as a result of the **customer** being ineligible to receive the tariff charged prior to the change, the **retailer** has **undercharged** the **customer**, limit the amount to be recovered to no more than the amount **undercharged** in the 12 months prior to the date on which the **retailer** notified the **customer** under clause 4.13;
 - (c) notify the **customer** of the amount to be recovered no later than the next bill, together with an explanation of that amount;
 - (d) subject to subclause (3), not charge the **customer** interest on that amount or require the **customer** to pay a late payment fee; and
 - (e) in relation to a **residential customer**, offer the **customer** time to pay that amount by means of an **instalment plan** in accordance with clause 6.4(2) and covering a period at least equal to the period over which the recoverable **undercharging** occurred.
- (3) If, after notifying a **customer** of the amount to be recovered in accordance with subclause (2)(c), the **customer** has failed to pay the amount to be recovered

by the due date and has not entered into an **instalment plan** under subclause (2)(e), a **retailer** may charge the **customer** interest on that amount from the due date or require the **customer** to pay a late payment fee.

- (4) For the purpose of subclause (2), an **undercharge** that has occurred as a result of a **customer** denying access to the **meter** is not an **undercharge** as a result of an error, defect or default for which a **retailer** or **distributor** is responsible.

4.18 Overcharging

- (1) This clause 4.18 applies whether the **overcharging** became apparent through a review under clause 4.15 or otherwise.
- (2) If a **customer** (including a **customer** who has vacated the **supply address**) has been **overcharged** as a result of an error, defect or default for which a **retailer** or **distributor** is responsible (including where a **meter** has been found to be defective), the **retailer** must use its best endeavours to inform the **customer** accordingly within 10 **business days** of the **retailer** becoming aware of the error, defect or default and, subject to subclauses (6) and (7), ask the **customer** for instructions as to whether the amount should be –
- (a) credited to the **customer's** account; or
- (b) repaid to the **customer**.
- (3) If a **retailer** receives instructions under subclause (2), the **retailer** must pay the amount in accordance with the **customer's** instructions within 12 **business days** of receiving the instructions.
- (4) If a **retailer** does not receive instructions under subclause (2) within 5 **business days** of making the request, the **retailer** must use reasonable endeavours to credit the amount **overcharged** to the **customer's** account.
- (5) No interest shall accrue to a credit or refund referred to in subclause (2).
- (6) If the amount referred to in subclause (2) is less than \$100, a **retailer** may notify a **customer** of the **overcharge** by no later than the next bill after the **retailer** became aware of the error, and –
- (a) ask the **customer** for instructions under subclause (2) (in which case subclauses (3) and (4) apply as if the **retailer** sought instructions under subclause (2)); or
- (b) credit the amount to the **customer's** next bill.
- (7) If a **customer** has been overcharged by a **retailer**, and the **customer** owes a debt to the **retailer**, then provided that the **customer** is not a **residential customer** experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**, the **retailer** may, with written notice to the **customer**, use the amount of the **overcharge** to set off the debt owed to the **retailer**. If, after the set off, there remains an amount of credit, the **retailer** must deal with that amount of credit in accordance with subclause (2) or, if the amount is less than \$100, subclause (6).
- (a) Not Used
- (b) Not Used

4.19 Adjustments

- (1) If a **retailer** proposes to recover an amount of an **adjustment** which does not arise due to any act or omission of a **customer**, the **retailer** must –
 - (a) limit the amount to be recovered to no more than the amount of the **adjustment** for the 12 months prior to the date on which the **meter** was read on the basis of the **retailer's** estimate of the amount of the **adjustment** for the 12 month period taking into account any **meter** readings and relevant seasonal and other factors agreed with the **customer**;
 - (b) notify the customer of the amount of the **adjustment** no later than the next bill, together with an explanation of that amount;
 - (c) not require the **customer** to pay a late payment fee; and
 - (d) in relation to a **residential customer**, offer the **customer** time to pay that amount by means of an **instalment plan** in accordance with clause 6.4(2) and covering a period at least equal to the period to which the **adjustment** related.
- (2) If the **meter** is read under either clause 4.6 or clause 4.3(2)(d) and the amount of the **adjustment** is an amount owing to the **customer**, the **retailer** must use its best endeavours to inform the **customer** accordingly within 10 **business days** of the **retailer** becoming aware of the **adjustment** and, subject to subclauses (5) and (7), ask the **customer** for instructions as to whether the amount should be –
 - (a) credited to the **customer's** account;
 - (b) repaid to the **customer**; or
 - (c) included as a part of the new bill smoothing arrangement if the **adjustment** arises under clause 4.3(2)(a)-(b).
- (3) If a **retailer** received instructions under subclause (2), the **retailer** must pay the amount in accordance with the **customer's** instructions within 12 **business days** of receiving the instructions.
- (4) If a **retailer** does not receive instructions under subclause (2) within 5 **business days** of making the request, the **retailer** must use reasonable endeavours to credit the amount of the **adjustment** to the **customer's** account.
- (5) If the amount referred to in subclause (2) is less than \$100, the **retailer** may notify the **customer** of the **adjustment** by no later than the next bill after the **meter** is read; and
 - (a) ask the **customer** for instructions under subclause (2), (in which case subclauses (3) and (4) apply as if the **retailer** sought instructions under subclause (2)); or
 - (b) credit the amount to the **customer's** next bill.
- (6) No interest shall accrue to an **adjustment** amount under subclause (1) or (2).
- (7) If the amount of the **adjustment** is an amount owing to the **customer**, and the **customer** owes a debt to the **retailer**, then provided that the **customer** is not a **residential customer** experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**, the **retailer** may, with written notice to the **customer**, use the amount of the **adjustment** to set off the debt owed to the **retailer**. If, after the set off, there remains an amount of credit, the **retailer** must deal with that

amount of credit in accordance with subclause (2) or, if the amount is less than \$100, subclause (5).

(a) Not used

(b) Not used

Part 5 Payment

5.1 Due dates for payment*

- (1) The due date on a bill must be at least 12 **business days** from the date of that bill unless otherwise agreed with a **customer**.
- (2) Unless a **retailer** specifies a later date, the date of dispatch is the date of the bill.

5.2 Minimum payment methods*

Unless otherwise agreed with a **customer**, a **retailer** must offer the **customer** at least the following payment methods –

- (a) in person at 1 or more payment outlets located within the Local Government District of the **customer's supply address**;
- (b) by mail;
- (c) for **residential customers**, by Centrepay;
- (d) electronically by means of BPay or credit card; and
- (e) by **telephone** by means of credit card or debit card.

5.3 Direct debit

If a **retailer** offers the option of payment by a **direct debit facility** to a **customer**, the **retailer** must, prior to the **direct debit facility** commencing, obtain the **customer's verifiable consent**, and agree with the **customer** the date of commencement of the **direct debit facility** and the frequency of the direct debits.

5.4 Payment in advance*

- (1) A **retailer** must accept payment in advance from a **customer** on request.
- (2) Acceptance of an advance payment by a **retailer** will not require the **retailer** to credit any interest to the amounts paid in advance.
- (3) Subject to clause 6.9, for the purposes of subclause (1), \$20 is the minimum amount for which a **retailer** will accept advance payments unless otherwise agreed with a **customer**.

5.5 Absence or illness

If a **residential customer** is unable to pay by way of the methods described in clause 5.2, due to illness or absence, a **retailer** must offer the **residential customer** on request redirection of the **residential customer's** bill to a third person at no charge.

5.6 Late payments

- (1) A **retailer** must not charge a **residential customer** a late payment fee if –
 - (a) the **residential customer** receives a **concession**, provided the **residential customer** did not receive 2 or more **reminder notices** within the previous 12 months; or
 - (b) the **residential customer** and the **retailer** have agreed to –
 - (i) a payment extension under Part 6, and the **residential customer** pays the bill by the agreed (new) due date; or
 - (ii) an **instalment plan** under Part 6, and the **residential customer** is making payments in accordance with the **instalment plan**, or
 - (c) subject to subclause (2), the **residential customer** has made a **complaint** directly related to the non-payment of the bill to the **retailer** or to the **gas ombudsman** and the **complaint** is not **resolved** by the **retailer** or is not determined or is upheld by the **gas ombudsman** (if a complaint has been made to the **gas ombudsman**). If the **complaint** is determined by the **gas ombudsman** in favour of the **retailer**, any late payment fee shall only be calculated from the date of the **gas ombudsman's** decision; or
 - (d) the **residential customer** is assessed by the **retailer** under clause 6.1(1) as being in **financial hardship**.
- (2) If a **retailer** has charged a late payment fee in the circumstances set out in subclause (1)(c) because the **retailer** was not aware of the **complaint**, the **retailer** will not contravene subclause (1)(c) but must refund the late payment fee on the **customer's** next bill.
- (3) If a **retailer** has charged a **residential customer** a late payment fee, the **retailer** must not charge an additional late payment fee in relation to the same bill within 5 **business days** from the date of receipt of the previous late payment fee notice.
- (4) A **retailer** must not charge a **residential customer** more than 3 late payment fees in relation to the same bill or more than 12 late payment fees in a year.
- (5) If a **residential customer** has been assessed as being in **financial hardship** under clause 6.1(1), a **retailer** must retrospectively waive any late payment fee charged under the **residential customer's** last bill prior to the assessment being made.

5.7 Vacating a supply address*

- (1) Subject to –
 - (a) subclauses (2) and (4);
 - (b) a **customer** giving a **retailer** notice; and
 - (c) the **customer** vacating the **supply address** at the time specified in the notice,

the **retailer** must not require the **customer** to pay for gas consumed at the **customer's supply address** from –

- (d) the date the **customer** vacated the **supply address**, if the **customer** gave at least 5 days' notice; or
 - (e) 5 days after the **customer** gave notice, in any other case,
- unless the **retailer** and the **customer** have agreed to an alternative date.
- (2) If a **customer** reasonably demonstrates to a **retailer** that the **customer** was evicted or otherwise required to vacate the **supply address**, the **retailer** must not require the **customer** to pay for gas consumed at the **customer's supply address** from the date the **customer** gave the **retailer** notice.
 - (3) For the purposes of subclauses (1) and (2), notice is given if a **customer** –
 - (a) informs a **retailer** of the date on which the **customer** intends to vacate, or has vacated the **supply address**; and
 - (b) gives the **retailer** a forwarding address to which a final bill may be sent.
 - (4) Notwithstanding subclauses (1) and (2), if –
 - (a) a **retailer** and a **customer** enter into a new **contract** for the **supply address**, the **retailer** must not require the previous **customer** to pay for gas consumed at the **customer's supply address** from the date that the new **contract** becomes effective;
 - (b) another **retailer** becomes responsible for the supply of gas to the **supply address**, the previous **retailer** must not require the **customer** to pay for gas consumed at the **customer's supply address** from the date that the other **retailer** becomes responsible; and
 - (c) the **supply address** is disconnected, the **retailer** must not require the **customer** to pay for gas consumed at the **customer's supply address** from the date that disconnection occurred.
 - (5) Notwithstanding subclauses (1), (2) and (4), a **retailer's** right to payment does not terminate with regard to any amount that was due up until the termination of the **contract**.

5.8 Debt collection

- (1) A **retailer** must not commence proceedings for recovery of a debt –
 - (a) from a **residential customer** who has informed the **retailer** in accordance with clause 6.1(1) that the **residential customer** is experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**, unless and until the **retailer** has complied with all the requirements of clause 6.1 and (if applicable) clause 6.3; and
 - (b) while a **residential customer** continues to make payments under an alternative payment arrangement under Part 6.
- (2) A **retailer** must not recover or attempt to recover a debt relating to a **supply address** from a person other than a **customer** with whom the **retailer** has or had entered into a **contract** for the supply of gas to that **customer's supply address**.

5.9 Debt collection

If a **customer** with a debt owing to a **retailer** requests the **retailer** to transfer the debt to another **customer**, the **retailer** may transfer the debt to the other

customer provided that the **retailer** obtains the other **customer's verifiable consent** to the transfer.

5.10 Simultaneous payments for gas and electricity

Where a **retailer** and a **residential customer** have entered into –

- (a) a **dual fuel contract**, or
- (b) separate **contracts** for the supply of electricity and gas, under which:
 - (i) a single bill for energy is; or
 - (ii) separate, simultaneous bills for electricity and gas are,issued to the **residential customer** and the **residential customer** does not pay the entire amount owing under that bill or those bills,

the **retailer** must:

- (c) apply a payment received from a **residential customer** for charges for the supply of electricity or gas respectively as agreed between the **retailer** and the **residential customer** in a written agreement; or
- (d) if no agreement is in place between the **retailer** and the **residential customer**, apply a payment received from the **residential customer** for charges for the supply of electricity or gas respectively as directed by the **residential customer**, or
- (e) if subclauses (c) and (d) do not apply, apply the payment in proportion to the relative value of each of the charges.

Part 6 Payment Difficulties & Financial Hardship

Division 1 – Assessment of financial situation

6.1 Assessment

- (1) If a **residential customer** informs a **retailer** that the **residential customer** is experiencing **payment problems**, the **retailer** must, (subject to clause 6.2) –
 - (a) within 5 **business days**, assess whether the **residential customer** is experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**; and
 - (b) if the **retailer** cannot make the assessment within 5 **business days**, refer the **residential customer** to a **relevant consumer representative** to make the assessment.
- (2) If a **residential customer** provides a **retailer** with an assessment from a **relevant consumer representative**, the **retailer** may adopt that assessment as its own assessment for the purposes of subclause (1)(a).
- (3) When undertaking the assessment required by subclause (1)(a), unless a **retailer** adopts an assessment from a **relevant consumer representative**, the **retailer** must give reasonable consideration to –
 - (a) information –
 - (i) given by the **residential customer**; and
 - (ii) requested or held by the **retailer**; or
 - (b) advice given by a **relevant consumer representative** (if any).
- (4) A **retailer** must advise a **residential customer** on request of the details and outcome of an assessment carried out under subclause (1).

6.2 Temporary suspension of actions

- (1) If a **retailer** refers a **residential customer** to a **relevant consumer representative** under clause 6.1(1)(b) then the **retailer** must grant the **residential customer** a **temporary suspension of actions**.
- (2) If a **residential customer** informs a **retailer** that the **residential customer** is experiencing **payment problems** under clause 6.1, and the **residential customer** –
 - (a) requests a **temporary suspension of actions**; and
 - (b) demonstrates to the **retailer** that the **residential customer** has made an appointment with a **relevant consumer representative** to assess the **residential customer's** capacity to pay,the **retailer** must not unreasonably deny the **residential customer's** request.
- (3) A **temporary suspension of actions** must be for at least 15 **business days**.
- (4) If a **relevant consumer representative** is unable to assess a **residential customer's** capacity to pay within the period referred to in subclause (3) and

the **residential customer** or **relevant consumer representative** requests additional time, a **retailer** must give reasonable consideration to the **residential customer's** or **relevant consumer representative's** request.

6.3 Assistance to be offered

- (1) If the assessment carried out under clause 6.1 indicates to a **retailer** that a **residential customer** is experiencing –
 - (a) **payment difficulties**, the **retailer** must –
 - (i) offer the **residential customer** the alternative payment arrangements referred to in clause 6.4(1)(a); and
 - (ii) advise the **residential customer** that additional assistance may be available if, due to **financial hardship**, the **residential customer** would be unable to meet its obligations under an agreed alternative payment arrangement; or
 - (b) **financial hardship**, the **retailer** must offer the **residential customer** –
 - (i) the alternative payment arrangements referred to in clause 6.4(1)(b); and
 - (ii) assistance in accordance with clauses 6.6 to 6.9.
- (2) Subclause (1) does not apply if a **retailer** is unable to make an assessment under clause 6.1 as a result of an act or omission by a **residential customer**.

Division 2 – Residential customers experiencing payment difficulties or financial hardship

6.4 Alternative payment arrangements

- (1) A **retailer** must offer a **residential customer** who is experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship** at least the following payment arrangements –
 - (a) if the **residential customer** is experiencing **payment difficulties**:
 - (i) additional time to pay a bill; and
 - (ii) if requested by the **residential customer**, an interest-free and fee-free **instalment plan** or other arrangement under which the **residential customer** is given additional time to pay a bill or to pay arrears (including any disconnection and reconnection charges) and is permitted to continue consumption,
 - (b) if the **residential customer** is experiencing **financial hardship**:
 - (i) additional time to pay a bill; and
 - (ii) an interest-free and fee-free **instalment plan** or other arrangement under which the **residential customer** is given additional time to pay a bill or to pay arrears (including any disconnection and reconnection charges) and is permitted to continue consumption.
- (2) When offering or amending an **instalment plan**, a **retailer** must –

- (a) ensure that the **instalment plan** is fair and reasonable taking into account information about a **residential customer's** capacity to pay and consumption history;
 - (b) comply with subclause (3).
- (3) If a **residential customer** accepts an **instalment plan** offered by a **retailer**, the **retailer** must –
- (a) within 5 **business days** of the **residential customer** accepting the **instalment plan** provide the **residential customer** with information in writing or by **electronic means**:
 - (i) that specifies the terms of the **instalment plan** (including the number and amount of payments, the duration of payments and how the payments are calculated);
 - (ii) the consequences of not adhering to the **instalment plan**; and
 - (iii) the importance of contacting the **retailer** for further assistance if the **residential customer** cannot meet or continue to meet the **instalment plan** terms, and
 - (b) notify the **residential customer** in writing or by **electronic means** of any amendments to the **instalment plan** at least 5 **business days** before they come into effect (unless otherwise agreed with the **residential customer**) and provide the **residential customer** with information in writing or by **electronic means** that clearly explains and assists the **residential customer** to understand those changes.
- (4) If a **residential customer** has, in the previous 12 months, had 2 **instalment plans** cancelled due to non-payment, a **retailer** does not have to offer that **residential customer** another **instalment plan** under subclause (1), unless the **retailer** is satisfied that the **residential customer** will comply with the **instalment plan**.
- (5) For the purposes of subclause (4), cancellation does not include the revision of an **instalment plan** under clause 6.7.

Division 3 – Assistance available to residential customers experiencing financial hardship

6.5 Definitions

In this division –

“customer experiencing financial hardship” means a **residential customer** who has been assessed by a **retailer** under clause 6.1(1) as experiencing **financial hardship**.

Subdivision 1 - Specific assistance available

6.6 Reduction of fees, charges and debt

- (1) A **retailer** must give reasonable consideration to a request by a **customer experiencing financial hardship**, or a **relevant consumer representative**, for a reduction of the **customer's** fees, charges or debt.
- (2) In giving reasonable consideration under subclause (1), a **retailer** should refer to the hardship procedures referred to in clause 6.10(3).

6.7 Revision of alternative payment arrangements

If a **customer experiencing financial hardship**, or a **relevant consumer representative**, reasonably demonstrates to a **retailer** that the **customer** is unable to meet the **customer's** obligations under a previously elected payment arrangement under clause 6.4(1)(b), the **retailer** must give reasonable consideration to –

- (a) offering the **customer** an **instalment plan**, if the **customer** had previously elected a payment extension; or
- (b) offering to revise the **instalment plan**, if the **customer** had previously elected an **instalment plan**.

6.8 Provision of information

A **retailer** must advise a **customer experiencing financial hardship** of the –

- (a) **customer's** right to have the bill redirected at no charge to a third person;
- (b) payment methods available to the **customer**;
- (c) **concessions** available to the **customer** and how to access them;
- (d) different types of tariffs available to the **customer**;
- (e) independent financial counselling services and **relevant consumer representatives** available to assist the **customer**; and
- (f) availability of any other financial assistance and grants schemes that the **retailer** should reasonably be aware of and how to access them.

6.9 Payment in advance

- (1) A **retailer** must determine the minimum payment in advance amount, as referred to in clause 5.4(3), for **residential customers** experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship** in consultation with **relevant consumer representatives**.
- (2) A **retailer** may apply different minimum payment in advance amounts for **residential customers** experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship** and other **customers**.

Subdivision 2 – Hardship policy and hardship procedures

6.10 Obligation to develop hardship policy and hardship procedures

- (1) A **retailer** must develop a hardship policy and hardship procedures to assist **customers experiencing financial hardship** in meeting their financial obligations and responsibilities to the **retailer**.
- (2) The hardship policy must –
 - (a) be developed in consultation with **relevant consumer representatives**;
 - (b) include a statement encouraging **customers** to contact their **retailer** if a **customer** is having trouble paying the **retailer's** bill;
 - (c) include a statement advising that the **retailer** will treat all **customers** sensitively and respectfully;
 - (d) include a statement that the **retailer** may reduce and/or waive fees, charges and debt;
 - (e) include an objective set of hardship indicators;
 - (f) include -
 - (i) an overview of the assistance available to **customers** in **financial hardship** or **payment difficulties** in accordance with Part 6 of the **Compendium** (other than the **retailer's** requirement to advise the **customer** of the ability to pay in advance and the matters referred to in clauses 6.8(a), (b) and (d));
 - (ii) that the **retailer** offers **residential customers** the right to pay their bills by Centrepay; and
 - (iii) a statement that the **retailer** is able to provide further detail on request;
 - (g) include an overview of any concessions that may be available to the **retailer's customers**;
 - (h) include -
 - (i) the National Interpreter Symbol with the words “Interpreter Services”;
 - (ii) information on the availability of independent multi-lingual services; and
 - (iii) information on the availability of **TTY** services;
 - (i) be available on the **retailer's** website; and
 - (j) be available in large print copies.
- (3) The hardship procedures must –
 - (a) be developed in consultation with **relevant consumer representatives**;
 - (b) provide for the training of staff –
 - (i) including **call centre** staff, all subcontractors employed to engage with **customers experiencing financial hardship** and field officers;

- (ii) on issues related to **financial hardship** and its impacts, and how to deal sensitively and respectfully with **customers** experiencing **financial hardship**;
 - (c) Not used
 - (d) include guidance –
 - (i) that assist the **retailer** in identifying **residential customers** who are experiencing **financial hardship**;
 - (ii) that assist the **retailer** in determining a **residential customer's** usage needs and capacity to pay when determining the conditions of an **instalment plan**;
 - (iii) for suspension of disconnection and debt recovery procedures;
 - (iv) on the reduction and/or waiver of fees, charges and debt; and
 - (v) on the recovery of debt; and
 - (e) require that the **retailer's** credit management staff have a direct **telephone** number and that number be provided to **relevant consumer representatives**.
- (4) If requested, a **retailer** must give **residential customers** and **relevant consumer representatives** a copy of the hardship policy, including by post at no charge.
 - (5) Not used
 - (6) If directed by the Authority, a **retailer** must review its hardship policy and hardship procedures and submit to the **Authority** the results of that review within **5 business days** after it is completed.
 - (7) A **retailer** must comply with the **Authority's** Financial Hardship Policy Guidelines.
 - (8) If a **retailer** makes a material amendment to the **retailer's** hardship policy, the **retailer** must submit to the **Authority** a copy of the **retailer's** amended hardship policy with **5 business days** of the amendment.

Division 4 – Business customers experiencing payment difficulties

6.11 Alternative payment arrangements

A **retailer** must consider any reasonable request for alternative payment arrangements from a **business customer** who is experiencing **payment difficulties**.

Part 7 Disconnection

Division 1 – Conduct in relation to disconnection

Subdivision 1 – Disconnection for failure to pay bill

7.1 General requirements

- (1) Prior to arranging for disconnection of a **customer's supply address** for failure to pay a bill, a **retailer** must –
- (a) give the **customer** a **reminder notice**, not less than 14 **business days** from the date of dispatch of the bill, including –
 - (i) the **retailer's telephone** number for billing and payment enquiries;
 - (ii) advice on how the **retailer** may assist in the event the **customer** is experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**; and
 - (iii) requiring payment to be made on or before the day not less than 20 **business days** after the day on which the bill was issued;
 - (b) use its best endeavours to **contact** the **customer** to advise of the proposed **disconnection**; and
 - (c) give the **customer** a **disconnection warning**, not less than 22 **business days** from the date of dispatch of the bill, advising the **customer** –
 - (i) that the **retailer** may disconnect the **customer** not less than 10 **business days** after the day on which the **disconnection warning** is given; and
 - (ii) of the existence and operation of **complaint** handling processes including the existence and operation of the **gas ombudsman** and the Freecall **telephone** number of the **gas ombudsman**.
- (2) For the purposes of subclause (1), a **customer** has failed to pay a **retailer's** bill if the **customer** has not –
- (a) paid the **retailer's** bill by the due date;
 - (b) agreed with the **retailer** to an offer of an **instalment plan** or other payment arrangement to pay the **retailer's** bill; or
 - (c) adhered to the **customer's** obligations to make payments in accordance with an agreed **instalment plan** or other payment arrangement relating to the payment of the **retailer's** bill.

7.2 Limitations on disconnection for failure to pay bill

- (1) Notwithstanding clause 7.1, a **retailer** must not arrange for the disconnection of a **customer's supply address** for failure to pay a bill –

- (a) within 1 **business day** after the expiry of the period referred to in the **disconnection warning**;
 - (b) if the **retailer** has made the **residential customer** an offer in accordance with clause 6.4(1) and the **residential customer** has –
 - (i) accepted the offer before the expiry of the period specified by the **retailer** in the **disconnection warning**; and
 - (ii) has used reasonable endeavours to settle the debt before the expiry of the time frame specified by the **retailer** in the **disconnection warning**;
 - (c) if the amount outstanding is less than an amount approved and published by the **Authority** in accordance with subclause (2) and the **customer** has agreed with the **retailer** to repay the amount outstanding;
 - (d) if the **customer** has made an application for a **concession** and a decision on the application has not yet been made;
 - (e) if the **customer** has failed to pay an amount which does not relate to the supply of gas;
 - (f) if the **supply address** does not relate to the bill, unless the amount outstanding relates to a **supply address** previously occupied by the **customer**, or
 - (g) where a **residential customer** has been assessed by a **retailer** under clause 6.1(1) as experiencing **payment difficulties** or **financial hardship**, without the **retailer** having provided the **customer** with information on the types of **concessions** available to the **customer**.
- (2) For the purposes of subclause (1)(c), the **Authority** may approve and publish, in relation to failure to pay a bill, an amount outstanding below which a **retailer** must not arrange for the disconnection of a **customer's supply address**.

7.3 Dual fuel contracts

- (1) If –
- (a) a **retailer** and a **residential customer** have entered into –
 - (i) a **dual fuel contract**; or
 - (ii) separate **contracts** for the supply of electricity and gas, under which –
 - A. a single bill for energy is; or
 - B. separate, simultaneous bills for electricity and gas are, issued to the **residential customer**; and
 - (b) the **retailer** is permitted to and wishes to arrange for disconnection of the supply of electricity and gas to the **residential customer's supply address** for failure to pay a bill,
- the **retailer** must arrange for disconnection of the supply of gas in priority to disconnection of the supply of electricity.

Subdivision 2 – Disconnection for denying access to meter

7.4 General requirements

- (1) A **retailer** must not arrange for the disconnection of a **customer's supply address** for denying access to the **meter**, unless –
- (a) the **customer** has denied access for the purpose of reading the **meter** for the purposes of issuing 3 consecutive bills;
 - (b) the **retailer** has, prior to giving the **customer** a **disconnection warning** under subclause (e), each time it was denied access given the **customer** in writing 5 **business days'** notice –
 - (i) advising the **customer** of the next date or timeframe of a scheduled **meter** reading at the **supply address**;
 - (ii) requesting access to the **meter** at the **supply address** for the purpose of the scheduled **meter** reading; and
 - (iii) advising the **customer** of the **retailer's** ability to arrange for disconnection if the **customer** fails to provide access to the **meter**;
 - (c) the **retailer** has given the **customer** an opportunity to provide reasonable alternative access arrangements;
 - (d) the **retailer** has used its best endeavours to **contact** the **customer** to advise of the proposed disconnection; and
 - (e) the **retailer** has given the **customer** a **disconnection warning** with at least 5 **business days'** notice of its intention to arrange for disconnection.
- (2) A **retailer** may arrange for a **distributor** to carry out 1 or more of the requirements referred in subclause (1) on behalf of the **retailer**.

Subdivision 3 – Disconnection for emergencies

7.5 General requirements

If a **distributor** disconnects a **customer's supply address** for **emergency** reasons, the **distributor** must –

- (a) provide, by way of a 24 hour emergency line at the cost of a local call (excluding mobile telephones), information on the nature of the **emergency** and an estimate of the time when supply will be restored; and
- (b) use its best endeavours to restore supply to the **customer's supply address** as soon as possible.

Division 2 – Limitations on disconnection

7.6 General limitations on disconnection

- (1) Subject to subclause (3), a **retailer** must not arrange for disconnection of a **customer's supply address** if:

- (a) a **complaint** has been made to the **retailer** directly related to the reason for the proposed disconnection; or
 - (b) the **retailer** is notified by the **distributor, gas ombudsman** or an external dispute resolution body that there is a **complaint**, directly related to the reason for the proposed disconnection, that has been made to the **distributor, gas ombudsman** or external dispute resolution body,
and the **complaint** is not **resolved** by the **retailer** or **distributor** or determined by the **gas ombudsman** or external dispute resolution body.
- (2) Subject to subclause (3), a **distributor** must not **disconnect** a **customer's supply address** –
- (a) if:
 - (i) a **complaint** has been made to the **distributor** directly related to the reason for the proposed disconnection; or
 - (ii) the **distributor** is notified by a **retailer, the gas ombudsman** or an external dispute resolution body that there is a **complaint**, directly related to the reason for the proposed disconnection, that has been made to the **retailer, gas ombudsman** or external dispute resolution body,
and the **complaint** is not **resolved** by the **retailer** or **distributor** or determined by the **gas ombudsman** or external dispute resolution body;
or
 - (b) during any time:
 - (i) after 3.00 pm Monday to Thursday; or
 - (ii) on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday, **public holiday** or on the **day** before a **public holiday**.
- (3) A **retailer** or a **distributor** may arrange for disconnection of a **customer's supply address** if the disconnection—
- (a) was requested by the **customer**;
 - (b) was carried out for **emergency reasons**;
 - (c) was the result of a planned **interruption**; or
 - (d) was to prevent unauthorised utilisation.

Part 8 Reconnection

8.1 Reconnection by retailer*

- (1) If a **retailer** has arranged for disconnection of a **customer's supply address** due to –
- (a) failure to pay a bill, and the **customer** has paid or agreed to accept an offer of an **instalment plan**, or other payment arrangement;
 - (b) the **customer** denying access to the **meter**, and the **customer** has subsequently provided access to the **meter**, or
 - (c) illegal use of gas, and the **customer** has remedied that breach, and has paid, or made an arrangement to pay, for the gas so obtained,
- the **retailer** must arrange for reconnection of the **customer's supply address**, subject to –
- (d) the **customer** making a request for reconnection; and
 - (e) the **customer** –
 - (i) paying the **retailer's** reasonable charge for reconnection, if any; or
 - (ii) accepting an offer of an **instalment plan** for the **retailer's** reasonable charges for reconnection, if any.
- (2) For the purposes of subclause (1), a **retailer** must forward the request for reconnection to the relevant **distributor** –
- (a) that same **business day**, if the request is received before 3pm on a **business day**; or
 - (b) no later than 3pm on the next **business day**, if the request is received –
 - (i) after 3pm on a **business day**, or
 - (ii) on a Saturday, Sunday or **public holiday**.

8.2 Reconnection by distributor

- (1) If a **distributor** has disconnected a **customer's supply address** on request by the **customer's retailer**, and the **retailer** has subsequently requested the **distributor** to reconnect the **customer's supply address**, then, subject to the **retailer** complying with any **retail market rules** applicable to that **retailer**, the **distributor** must reconnect the **customer's supply address**.
- (2) Subject to subclause (3) and for the purposes of subclause (1), a **distributor** must reconnect a **customer's supply address** within 2 **business days** of receipt of the request.
- (3) Subclause (2) does not apply –
- (a) where a **retailer** has notified a **distributor** of a later date for reconnection, in which case, subject to this subclause, the **distributor** must reconnect a **customer's supply address** within 2 **business days** of that later date;

- (b) in the event of an **emergency**, in which case a **distributor** must reconnect a **customer's supply address** within 2 **business days** of the **emergency** ceasing to exist;
 - (c) if a **distributor's** access to the **supply address** has been restricted, in which case the **distributor** must reconnect a **customer's supply address** within 2 **business days** of becoming aware that access to the **customer's supply address** is unrestricted;
 - (d) if it is unsafe to reconnect the **supply address**, in which case a **distributor** must reconnect a **customer's supply address** within 2 **business days** of becoming aware that the safety issue has been resolved; or
 - (e) if the reconnection requires excavation, in which case a **distributor** must reconnect a **customer's supply address** within 10 **business days** of receipt of the request to reconnect.
- (4) If any of the circumstances described in subclauses (3)(b) to (e) apply, a **distributor** must notify a **retailer** of the relevant circumstance that applies within 2 **business days** of receipt of the reconnection request made under subclause (1).
- (5) Notwithstanding subclause (1), if a **distributor** becomes aware that there has been unauthorised utilisation of gas at a **customer's supply address**, the **distributor** –
- (a) must notify a **retailer** of the unauthorised utilisation as soon as practicable; and
 - (b) is not obliged to reconnect the **customer's supply address** until the issue is resolved.

**Part 9
NOT USED**

[Note – Part 9 is not used to ensure conformity of numbering with the Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers.]

Part 10 Information & Communication
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Division 1 – Obligations particular to retailers

10.1 Tariff information

- (1) A **retailer** must give notice to each of its **customers** affected by a variation in its tariffs no later than the next bill in a **customer's billing cycle**.
- (2) A **retailer** must give a **customer** on request, at no charge, reasonable information on the **retailer's** tariffs, including any **alternative tariffs** that may be available to that **customer**.
- (3) A **retailer** must give a **customer** the information referred to under subclause (2) within 8 **business days** of the date of receipt. If requested by the **customer**, the **retailer** must give the information in writing.

10.2 Historical billing data

- (1) A **retailer** must give a **customer** on request the **customer's** billing data.
- (2) If a **customer** requests billing data under subclause (1) –
 - (a) for a period less than the previous 2 years and no more than once a year; or
 - (b) in relation to a dispute with a **retailer**,the **retailer** must give the billing data at no charge.
- (3) A **retailer** must give a **customer** the billing data requested under subclause (1) within 10 **business days** of the date of receipt of –
 - (a) the request; or
 - (b) payment for the **retailer's** reasonable charge for providing the billing data (if requested by the **retailer**).
- (4) A **retailer** must keep a **customer's** billing data for 7 years.

10.3 Concessions

A **retailer** must give a **residential customer** on request at no charge –

- (a) information on the types of **concessions** available to the **residential customer**, and
- (b) the name and contact details of the organisation responsible for administering those **concessions** (if the **retailer** is not responsible).

10.4 Energy efficiency advice

A **retailer** must give, or make available to, a **customer** on request, at no charge, general information on –

- (a) cost effective and efficient ways to utilise gas (including referring the **customer** to a relevant information source); and
- (b) the typical running costs of major domestic appliances.

10.5 Distribution matters

If a **customer** asks a **retailer** for information relating to the distribution of gas, the **retailer** must –

- (a) give the information to the **customer**; or
- (b) if the **retailer** cannot practicably provide the information to the **customer**, refer the **customer** to the relevant **distributor** for a response.

10.5A Gas customer safety awareness programme

- (1) A **retailer** must, within 3 months of being subject to this **Compendium**, lodge with the **Authority** a **gas customer safety awareness programme** in accordance with subclause (3).
- (2) A **retailer** must consult with the **Authority** when preparing the **gas customer safety awareness programme**.
- (3) A **gas customer safety awareness programme** is to communicate information to **customers** regarding safety in the use of gas and must address, at a minimum, provision of the following information to **customers**:
 - (a) information on the properties of gas relevant to its use by **customers**;
 - (b) a notice of the requirement for proper installation and use of approved appliances and equipment;
 - (c) a notice of the requirement to use only qualified trade persons for gas connection and appliance and equipment installation;
 - (d) the proper procedure for the reporting of gas leaks or appliance or equipment defects; and
 - (e) safety procedures to be followed and the appropriate **telephone** number to call in case of **emergency**.

Division 2 – Obligations particular to distributors

10.6 General information

A **distributor** must –

- (a) give a **customer** on request, at no charge; or
- (b) direct the **customer** to a person or class of persons who can provide, the following information –
 - (c) information on the **distributor's** requirements in relation to the **customer's** proposed new gas installation, or changes to the **customer's** existing gas installation, including advice about supply extensions;
 - (d) an explanation for any unplanned **interruption** of supply to the **customer's supply address**;

- (e) advice on facilities required to protect the **distributor's** equipment;
- (f) advice on how to obtain information on protecting the **customer's** equipment;
- (g) advice on the **customer's** gas usage so that it does not interfere with the operation of a distribution system;
- (h) general information on quality of supply; and
- (i) general information on reliability of supply.

10.7 NOT USED

10.8 NOT USED

Division 3 – Obligations particular to retailers and distributors

10.9 Written information must be easy to understand

To the extent practicable, a **retailer** and **distributor** must ensure that any written information that must be given to a **customer** by the **gas marketing agent, retailer** or **distributor** under the **Gas Marketing Code** and the **Compendium** is expressed in clear, simple and concise language and is in a format that makes it easy to understand.

10.10 Gas Marketing Code and Compendium

- (1) A **retailer** must –
 - (a) advise a **customer** on request how the **customer** can obtain a copy of the **Gas Marketing Code** and the **Compendium**; and
 - (b) make electronic copies of the **Gas Marketing Code** and the **Compendium** available, at no charge, on the **retailer's** website.
 - (c) Not used.
- (2) A **distributor** must –
 - (a) advise a **customer** on request how the **customer** can obtain a copy of the **Compendium**; and
 - (b) make electronic copies of the **Compendium** available, at no charge, on the **distributor's** website.
 - (c) Not used.

10.11 Special Information Needs

- (1) A **retailer** and a **distributor** must make available to a **residential customer** on request, at no charge, services that assist the **residential customer** in interpreting information provided by the **retailer** or **distributor** to the **residential customer** (including independent multi-lingual and **TTY** services, and large print copies).
- (2) A **retailer** and, if appropriate, a **distributor** must include in relation to **residential customers** –

- (a) the **telephone** number for its **TTY** services;
- (b) the **telephone** number for independent multi-lingual services; and
- (c) the **telephone** number for interpreter services together with the **National Interpreter Symbol** and the words “Interpreter Services”,
on the –
- (d) bill and bill related information (including, for example, the notice referred to in clause 4.2(3) and statements relating to an **instalment plan**);
- (e) **reminder notice**; and
- (f) **disconnection warning**.

10.12 NOT USED

**Part 11
NOT USED**

[Note – Part 11 is not used to ensure conformity of numbering with the Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers.]

Part 12

Complaints & Dispute Resolution

12.1 Obligation to establish complaints handling process

- (1) A **retailer** and **distributor** must develop, maintain and implement an internal process for handling **complaints** and resolving disputes.
- (2) The **complaints** handling process under subclause (1) must –
 - (a) comply with **Australian Standard** AS/NZS 10002:2014;
 - (b) address at least –
 - (i) how **complaints** must be lodged by **customers**;
 - (ii) how **complaints** will be handled by a **retailer** or **distributor** including –
 - A. a right of a **customer** to have its **complaint** considered by a senior employee within each organisation of the **retailer** or **distributor** if the **customer** is not satisfied with the manner in which the **complaint** is being handled;
 - B. the information that will be provided to a **customer**;
 - (iii) response times for **complaints**; and
 - (iv) method of response; and
 - (c) detail how a **retailer** will handle **complaints** about the **retailer**, **gas marketing agents** or **marketing**; and
 - (d) be available at no cost to **customers**.
- (3) For the purposes of subclause (2)(b)(ii)(B), a **retailer** or **distributor** must at least –
 - (a) when responding to a **complaint**, advise the **customer** that the **customer** has the right to have the **complaint** considered by a senior employee within the **retailer** or **distributor** (in accordance with its **complaints** handling process); and
 - (b) when a **complaint** has not been **resolved** internally in a manner acceptable to a **customer**, advise the **customer** –
 - (i) of the reasons for the outcome (on request, the **retailer** or **distributor** must supply such reasons in writing); and
 - (ii) that the **customer** has the right to raise the **complaint** with the **gas ombudsman** or another relevant external dispute resolution body and provide the Freecall **telephone** number of the **gas ombudsman**.
- (4) For the purpose of subclause (2)(b)(iii), a **retailer** or **distributor** must, on receipt of a written **complaint** by a **customer** –
 - (a) acknowledge the **complaint** within 10 **business days**; and
 - (b) respond to the **complaint** by addressing the matters in the **complaint** within 20 **business days**.

12.2 Obligation to comply with a guideline that distinguishes customer queries from complaints

A **retailer** must comply with any guideline developed by the **Authority** relating to distinguishing **customer** queries from **complaints**.

12.3 Information provision

A **retailer**, **distributor** and **gas marketing agent** must give a **customer** on request, at no charge, information that will assist the **customer** in utilising the respective **complaints** handling processes.

12.4 Obligation to refer complaint

When a **retailer**, **distributor** or **gas marketing agent** receives a **complaint** that does not relate to its functions, it must advise the **customer** of the entity that the **retailer**, **distributor** or **gas marketing agent** reasonably considers to be the appropriate entity to deal with the **complaint** (if known).

Part 13 Reporting

13.1 Preparation of an annual report

A **retailer** and a **distributor** must prepare a report in respect of each **reporting year** setting out the information specified by the Authority.

13.2 Provision of annual report to the Authority

A report referred to in clause 13.1 must be provided to the **Authority** by the date, and in the matter and form, specified by the **Authority**.

13.3 Publication of reports

- (1) A report referred to in clause 13.1 must be published by the date specified by the **Authority**.
- (2) A report is published for the purposes of subclause (1) if –
 - (a) copies of it are available to the public, without cost, at places where the **retailer** or **distributor** transacts business with the public; and
 - (b) a copy of it is posted on an internet website maintained by the **retailer** or **distributor**.

**Part 14
NOT USED**

[Note – Part 14 is not used to ensure conformity of numbering with the Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers.]

Appendix 3 Submissions received



2 November 2016

Mr Paul Kelly
Executive Director
Licensing, Monitoring and Customer Protection
Economic Regulation Authority
PO Box 8469
Perth BC WA 6849

By email: publicsubmissions@erawa.com.au

Dear Paul

Proposed amendments to the Compendium of Gas Customer Licence Obligations

Alinta Sales Pty Ltd (**Alinta Energy**) is pleased to provide comment on the amendments to the *Compendium of Gas Customer Licence Obligations* (**Compendium**) proposed by the Economic Regulation Authority (**ERA**). 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.

Alinta Energy notes the proposed amendments maintain consistency with the *Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers* (**Electricity Code**) which was revised in June 2016.

Alinta Energy supports the amendments proposed by the ERA, in particular:

- **Clause 4.1 Billing cycle** – The proposal is to modify the requirement for a retailer to issue a bill at least every 3 months to a requirement to issue a bill at least every 105 days. This aligns with the obligation that the gas distributor, ATCO Gas Australia, use reasonable endeavours to read the meter at intervals of no more than 105 days¹. Alinta Energy acknowledges the current amendment to its retail licence, whereby Alinta Energy must issue a bill at least every 110 days unless a customer's consent is obtained, will be removed. Alinta Energy notes there will continue to be a small percentage of customers who will receive a bill beyond the 105 day threshold.
- **Clause 4.18 Overcharging** – If a customer is overcharged as a result of error and the amount is less than \$75, the retailer may notify the customer of the overcharge no later than the next bill and may credit the amount to the customer's next bill. The proposal is to increase the amount from \$75 to \$100, aligned with the Electricity Code.

¹ *Template Service Agreement* Schedule 4 cl 4(b) for Reference Service B2 and Schedule 5 cl 4(b) for Reference Service B3

- **Clause 5.9 Debt collection** – This new clause allows the retailer to transfer the debt of one customer to another customer provided the other customer’s verifiable consent to the debt transfer is obtained.
- **Clause 6.1 Assessment** – A retailer must assess whether a residential customer is experiencing payment difficulties or financial hardship within 5 business days of being informed by the customer of payment problems. The increase from 3 business days will give a retailer more time to make an assessment.
- **Clause 12.1 Obligation to establish complaints handling process** – A retailer’s or distributor’s internal process for handling disputes must comply with Australian Standard AS/NZS 10002:2014, which has replaced ISO 10002:2006. Alinta Energy is pleased to advise its customer compliant handling process is compliant with this new standard.

Alinta Energy supports commencement of these changes on 1 January 2017.

If you have any questions concerning this submission please contact me on 9486 3191 or catherine.rousch@alintaenergy.com.au.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Rousch
Manager Regulatory Compliance
Alinta Energy

Our Ref: *RRM-0064 10653788*
Enquiries: Suzanne Lloyd
Telephone: 6282 7633

4 November 2016

Economic Regulation Authority
PO Box 8469
PERTH BC WA 6849

Email: publicsubmissions@erawa.com.au

Attention: Sarah Lyons

Dear Sarah

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE COMPENDIUM OF GAS CUSTOMER LICENCE OBLIGATIONS (COMPENDIUM)

Synergy appreciates the opportunity provided by the Authority to comment on the proposed changes to the compendium as detailed in the notice of 17 October 2016.

We support the proposed changes on the basis that when possible minimum service standards for small use gas customers should align with those of small use electricity customers under the regulatory framework.

Yours sincerely

SUZANNE LLOYD
REGULATORY AND COMPLIANCE ANALYST

3 November 2016

Economic Regulation Authority
Level 4, Albert Facey House
469 Wellington Street
PERTH WA 6000

BY EMAIL: publicsubmission@erawa.com.au

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE COMPENDIUM OF GAS CUSTOMER LICENCE OBLIGATIONS

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed amendments to the Compendium of Gas Customer Licence Obligations (**the Compendium**). ATCO Gas Australia (**ATCO**) has reviewed the proposed amendments and wishes to make a submission on the proposed changes to clauses 4 and 12 of the Compendium.

a) Retailers' billing cycles – clause 4.1(b) of the Compendium

ATCO supports the proposed amendment to clause 4.1(b) of the Compendium to extend the retailers' minimum billing cycle from at least every "3 months" to "105 days". The proposed amendment will substantially address the current issue where the retailers' billing frequency in the Compendium is shorter than the meter reading frequency set out in ATCO's current Access Arrangement¹.

By way of background, ATCO manages the meter reading process through its Network Management Information System (NMIS). This system holds the calendar of future reading dates and controls the metering data that is issued to and received from the meter reading contractor each business day. Once meter reading data has been successfully processed of (ie, data has passed verification), NMIS issues a Meter Data Notification file to each retailer containing meter reading data for their respective MIRNs. Where meter reading data fails verification, that meter reading data is required to be manually investigated by data operators for correction and subsequent submission to the retailer.

¹ ATCO is required under clause 4, schedule 4 of the Template Services Agreement, which forms part of the current Access Arrangement, to use reasonable endeavours to read the Meter at intervals of no more than 105 days. This meter reading frequency has been in place since 2004 when the retail market rules were introduced in Western Australia.



The meter reading process for small use customer meters (e.g: Tariff B3 customers) is based on a 62 working days reading cycle. The actual number of days between reads can increase from 90 to 105 depending on weekends, public holidays, lay days (agreed non-reading days with meter readers) and when there is an unforeseen delay in obtaining and returning the reads. While ATCO has up to 105 days to submit meter reading data to retailers, ATCO submits over 99% of all meter readings to retailers on or before the 98th day.

To address the inconsistency between the billing and meter reading frequencies, the Authority also considered the option of increasing ATCO's meter reading frequency from "at intervals of no more than 105 days" to "at least once every three months". ATCO worked with the Authority earlier to provide detailed submissions on the estimated costs to implement an increased meter reading frequency.

For ATCO to implement an increased meter reading frequency to once every three months would require changes to ATCO's billing systems together with associated increases in meter reading costs, as more meter readers would be required to read the same volume of meters within a shorter period of time. The current meter reading intervals operate efficiently by ensuring there is an even distribution of meter reads of around 10,000-12,000 conducted each business day. If the read frequency period is increased (ie: over a shorter period), this efficiency would be substantially eroded, resulting in higher meter reading costs from a requirement for more frequent readings being undertaken by meter readers.

ATCO agrees with the Authority that the costs involved in increasing the frequency of meter readings outweigh the benefits of customers receiving a bill every three months, and increasing retailers' billing frequency to address the inconsistency is the preferred option in the interest of customers. The Authority's proposal is consistent with the Australian Energy Market Commission's determination on this issue published in June 2016.

b) The new Australian Standard on complaints handling AS/NZS 10002:2014 – clause 12.1(2)(a) of the Compendium

ATCO also supports the adoption of the new Australian Standard on complaints handling AS/NZS 10002:2014 (**New Standard**) in clause 12.1(2)(a) of the Compendium, which replaced the superseded complaints handling standard AS ISO 10002:2006 (**Old Standard**).

ATCO has reviewed the New Standard, and noted that it provides more detailed guidance on complaints management and a number of enhancements including –

- New definitions of complaint and feedback (clause 4 of AS/NZS 10002:2014)
- New guiding principle on "People Focus" (clause 5.1.1 of AS/NZS 10002:2014)



- New specific requirement on accepting complaints from authorised representatives of complainants (clause 5.1.4 of AS/NZS 10002:2014)
- New specific requirement on a mentor or buddy system and assessment of competency to ensure staff are competent to handle complaints effectively and efficiently (clause 7.6 of AS/NZS 10002:2014)

While the changes introduced by the New Standard are unlikely to have a major impact, licensees will need time to review and update policies, procedures and training materials to ensure compliance with the New Standard, and provide training to staff on the impacts and requirements imposed by the changes.

ATCO suggests that the New Standard should apply from 1 April 2017, as this provide all affected licensees with a reasonable 4 month transitional period to implement any required changes.

Should you have any queries in respect of the information provided, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone on 6163 5051 or email: tony.yiu@atcogas.com.au.

Yours sincerely

Tony Yiu
Senior Manager – Risk, Compliance and Internal Audit
ATCO Gas Australia

