



energy & water  
OMBUDSMAN SA

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Dear Ms Miller

### **Water Retail Codes – Intermediate and Minor Retailers**

The Energy and Water Ombudsman (SA) Limited ("the Scheme") welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Consultation Draft Water Retail Codes.

In this submission we only address matters that are specifically of interest to our Scheme. In relation to any other matter, no comments are made.

We are the independent energy and water ombudsman in South Australia. We receive, investigate and facilitate the resolution of complaints by customers with regard to (*inter alia*) the connection, supply or sale of electricity, gas or water.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft Water Retail Codes, and apologise for the lateness of our response.

We fully support the proposed new Codes. However, we note they are very much based on the old Energy Retail Code, rather than the National Energy Retail Rules. We suggest that, where practical, the Codes should be modelled on the National Energy Customer Framework for consistency, for example back billing being limited to 9 months, mandated hardship policies, and in general using similar format and terminology throughout the Code. We understand it is planned to align the Codes in the future.

The matter that will have the most impact on our Scheme is clause 3.2 Customer complaint and dispute resolution. Whilst we are comfortable with the proposed requirements, clause 3.2.2(e) "...referral to the industry ombudsman scheme where the complaint is not satisfactorily resolved..." may cause some issues to us and the complainants.

It should be noted that if a Retailer is not a Member of the Scheme, we are not able to handle complaints from their customers. Should ESCOSA require the Retailer to join the Scheme, and they become a Member in due course, we will be able to deal with any enquiries or complaints in the same manner we deal with customers of existing Members.

It is our view that entities with small customer numbers should be treated in the same way as small energy retailers in relation to joining the Scheme. We understand that ESCOSA requires those entities to have alternative customer complaint and dispute resolution procedures in place and actively monitors the complaints and complaint trends of those entities. However, we believe that intermediate size water retailers with customer number of 5,000 or over should be required to join the Scheme to afford their customers with access to the Scheme in a similar way to energy customers.

We would also like to be involved in or informed of the process whereby Retailers may be required to join our Scheme. It may be challenging to administer and update our systems, team knowledge, contact details and such should a large number of new Members join at the same time.

Should you require further information or have any enquiries in relation to this submission please contact me on 8216 1888 or Pia Bentick on 8216 1854.

Yours faithfully



Sandy Canale  
Energy and Water Ombudsman SA