

Energy regulator says energy reforms ‘a game changer’

30 October 2018

Electricity and gas

Victoria's energy regulator has adopted [sweeping new reforms](#) that make electricity and gas retailers responsible for helping customers get on to their best energy deals.

The Essential Services Commission has released a final decision on its first tranche of reforms following the government's support for an [independent review into the retail electricity and gas markets in Victoria](#).

Commission chair Ron Ben-David says the reforms are a ‘game changer’.

"The new rules hold energy retailers responsible for rebuilding consumers' trust and confidence in the retail energy market," he said.

The commission has created three new customer entitlements that will oblige electricity and gas retailers to provide their customers with genuinely helpful assistance in finding the most suitable energy deal for them.

From 1 July 2019, energy customers will be entitled to meaningful, timely and respectful assistance from their electricity and gas companies. This includes obliging energy retailers to:

- tell customers whether they're on the retailer's best energy plan and how much the customer could save by switching to that plan (best offer message), at least quarterly for electricity bills and at least every 4 months for gas bills

- give customers at least five days warning before making changes that will affect the customer's bill (and include the 'best offer' message)
- provide clear and helpful advice about the retailer's best energy plan before signing a customer on to a new energy deal (taking into account all relevant terms and conditions).

From 1 July 2019, retailers will also have to present all prices with GST included to make it easier to compare offers between retailers.

Dr Ben-David says the reforms will make life unpleasant for the energy companies who rely on 'tricky contracts and sneaky price increases'.

"As an essential service, it's time energy companies focused on services not sales," said Dr Ben-David.

Editor's note, 10.30am 30 October 2018: We previously stated that the best offer message must appear every six months for electricity and gas. We have updated this information to reflect that electricity customers must receive a best offer message every three months, and gas customers every four.

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Hear our chairperson, Ron Ben-David, discuss changes to the Energy Retail Code that will help customers determine whether they can get a better deal on energy prices.

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