

CUSTOMER SERVICE

BENCHMARKING

AUSTRALIA

**Comparative Victorian Energy Utility
Call Centre Performance Report 2008–09**

Prepared for



August 2009

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INTRODUCTION

Customer Service Benchmarking Australia's mystery shoppers called ten Victorian energy retailers over four quarterly surveys during 2008–09.

In total, 1157 calls were made by CSBA to Victorian Energy Sector companies and 4840 to the overall National Energy sector during 2008–09.

As well as assessing calls overall, this report isolates those calls that are related to hardship issues and in Part Two compares them with non-hardship calls. For this section of the survey, 529 hardship calls were made to Victorian Energy Sector companies over the course of the four quarterly surveys.

The survey results provide a means of assessing the customer service levels delivered by the Victorian energy retailers during 2008–09. The overall results for the Victorian Energy Sector are compared with the results from the 2007–08 survey.

The results are also shown by quarter and are compared with the National Energy Sector and a Basket of Companies which comprises: Optus, Qantas, National Australia Bank and the RACV.

Throughout the report, only differences of three or more points are highlighted, unless specified otherwise.

Victorian Energy Companies Surveyed during 2008–09 include the following:

AGL
Country Energy
Energy Australia
Jackgreen Energy
Simply Energy
Origin Energy
Powerdirect
Red Energy
TRUenergy
Victoria Electricity

Note: In 2008-09 Momentum Energy was excluded from the Survey and replaced with Simply Energy.

Summary of Key Measures

The Key Measures Table (Table 7), page 21, summarises the changes since the last survey (2007–08) for the Victorian and National Energy Sectors, and highlights the highest and lowest results of the ten Victorian Energy Companies surveyed in 2008-09.

The Victorian Energy Sector recorded a Connect Time that was slower by 17 seconds when compared with the 2007–08 survey. The previous result of 77 seconds increased to 94 seconds. Connect Times across the ten companies ranged from 68 seconds (Jackgreen Energy) to 118 seconds (AGL). The National Average was 83 seconds (73 seconds previously).

In 2008–09, 64% of calls to the Victorian Energy Sector were answered within 30 seconds of the commencement of the call (67% previously) while nationally, the result was 65% (70% previously).

The Greeting Quality Index of the Victorian Energy Sector companies remained stable at 91%, while that of the National Energy Sector was nominally down by one point to 90%. Salutation in Victoria was down by one point, to 98%, Company Name and Sign Off were unchanged at 94% and 98% respectively, while Offer to Help, still at low levels, showed a minor improvement of two points to 66%.

Best Practice Agent Manner remained stable at 74% for the Victorian Energy Sector, while the National Energy Sector result was down by three points to 74%. Total Acceptable Manner in Victoria was nominally higher by one point to 95%, equal to the National result.

The Enquiry Handling Skills Index for the Victorian Energy Sector was slightly down (by a point) compared to the previous year at 80%, while that of the National Energy Sector fell by three points to 81%. Courteous and Helpful (89%) remained unchanged in Victoria. Probed Needs was up a point to 71%. Both Good Product Knowledge (80%) and Provided Clear Outcome (80%) fell this year by one and three points respectively. All enquiry skills criteria for the National Energy Sector were down in 2008-09.

Hardship calls were handled sympathetically by the Victorian Energy Sector in 2008-09 with a slightly higher use of Best Practice Manner for hardship calls at 76% (72% for non-hardship). The same trend is seen in Total Acceptable Manner where 97% of Agents used this approach for hardship calls versus 93% for non-hardship calls. The Enquiry Handling Index for hardship calls was one point higher than non-hardship calls in 2008-09 at 81%. Positively, a more Courteous and Helpful approach was used for hardship calls (91%) than non-hardship calls (87%). However, Probed Needs for hardship calls was 71% compared to 73% for non-hardship calls.

PART ONE—Overview of Victorian Energy Sector Companies

Customer Service Benchmarking Australia measured the customer service levels of ten Victorian Energy Sector companies in 2008–09, including the gas and electricity lines for AGL, TRUenergy and Origin Energy. The gas and electricity results for those three companies have been amalgamated to form a composite energy result for each. The Victorian Energy Sector results are compared with an aggregate of all energy companies surveyed in Australia, (classified as the National Energy Sector) and a Basket of Companies total which comprised: Optus, Qantas, National Australia Bank and the RACV.

Strengths

- Greeting Skills were excellent and maintained stability at a high 91% when compared year-on-year.
- There was increased use of Best Practice Manner (Interested Warm and Helpful) and Total Acceptable Manner towards hardship calls amongst the Victorian Energy Sector. Agents were also shown to be more Courteous and Helpful with hardship calls.

Weaknesses

- Connect Time to reach an Agent remains slow and recorded a sizeable increase of 17 seconds this year, resulting in a slower connect time of 94 seconds compared to 77 seconds previously.
- The Victorian Energy Sector average of 74% for Best Practice Manner was unchanged: individual results varied considerably, from 66% to 84%. Total Acceptable Manner ranged from a low of 90% to a high of 98%. This suggests that in the lower scoring companies there is an inappropriate level of Unacceptable Agent Manner being used.
- Some Agents at a minority of companies displayed poorer scores for Manner and Enquiry Handling Skills when dealing with hardship calls than in non-hardship calls (see Part 2).

Areas to Address

- Slow Connect Time.
- Once the IVR delay has been negotiated, 64% of callers are connected to an Agent within 30 seconds, but 36% are not.
- Within the Greeting Skills Index the inclusion of an Offer to Help the caller is low (66%).
- All Enquiry handling Skills especially Probed Needs (low at 71%).
- Address poor results for dealing with hardship calls at a minority of companies.

Commendation

- TRUenergy for connecting 84% of callers within 30 seconds of any IVR delay and consistently achieving quick connection across 3 out of 4 quarters in 2008-09.
- Energy Australia Vic for consistently measuring at high levels on: the Greeting Quality Index, Best Practice Manner and Total Acceptable Agent Manner.
- Country Energy Vic for maintaining high scores on the Enquiry Handling Index where it achieved the best result this year and last year and in three of the four quarters in 2008-09.
- Country Energy Vic for being consistently better in their dealings with hardship calls on the: Enquiry Skills Index, Best Practice and Total Acceptable Manner.
- All other companies where Agent Manner and Enquiry Handling Skills improved when dealing with hardship calls compared with non-hardship calls.

1. Connect Times

In 2008-09, callers contacting Victorian Energy Sector companies experienced a sizeable increase on last year's Average Connect Time, slowing by seventeen seconds to 94 seconds. The National Energy Sector was 10 seconds slower than the previous year, at 83 seconds.

The average Connect Time in the Victorian Energy Sector was stable for the Jul-Sept 08 and Oct-Dec 08 quarters (88 and 89 seconds respectively) but increased by 27 seconds in the Jan-Mar 09 quarter to 116 seconds. The Connect Time, however, improved to 87 seconds in the Apr-Jun 09 quarter. Connect Times in the National Energy Sector ranged from 77 seconds in Quarter 1 to 98 seconds in Quarter 3 but then improved to 87 seconds in Quarter 4.

The average Connect Time for the Basket of Companies in 2008-09 was 112 seconds; this was 12 seconds slower than 2007-08. The Basket of Companies showed slower Connect Times in the Jul-Sep 08 (120 seconds) and Apr-Jun 09 quarters (118 seconds). Connect Times were somewhat improved in Jan-Mar 09 (109 seconds) and Oct-Dec 08 (108 seconds) quarters.

Table 1 (below) shows that average Connect Time to the Victorian Energy Sector ranged from 88 seconds in Quarter 1 to 98 seconds in Quarter 4. Average Connect Times by quarter for the National Energy Sector were quicker ranging from 77 seconds in Quarter 1 to 87 seconds in Quarter 4.

Average Connect Times for the Victorian Energy Sector in 2008-09 ranged from the quickest of 68 seconds to the slowest time of 118 seconds (see table 7).

Jackgreen Energy was the quickest Victorian energy company overall in 2008-09, with an average Connect Time for the year of 68 seconds. Jackgreen Energy achieved the fastest Connect Times in Quarter 1 and Quarter 3. Jackgreen Energy's overall result was four seconds slower than the overall best for 2007-08 – Momentum at 64 seconds, but 26 seconds faster than the Victorian Energy Sector average for 2008-09.

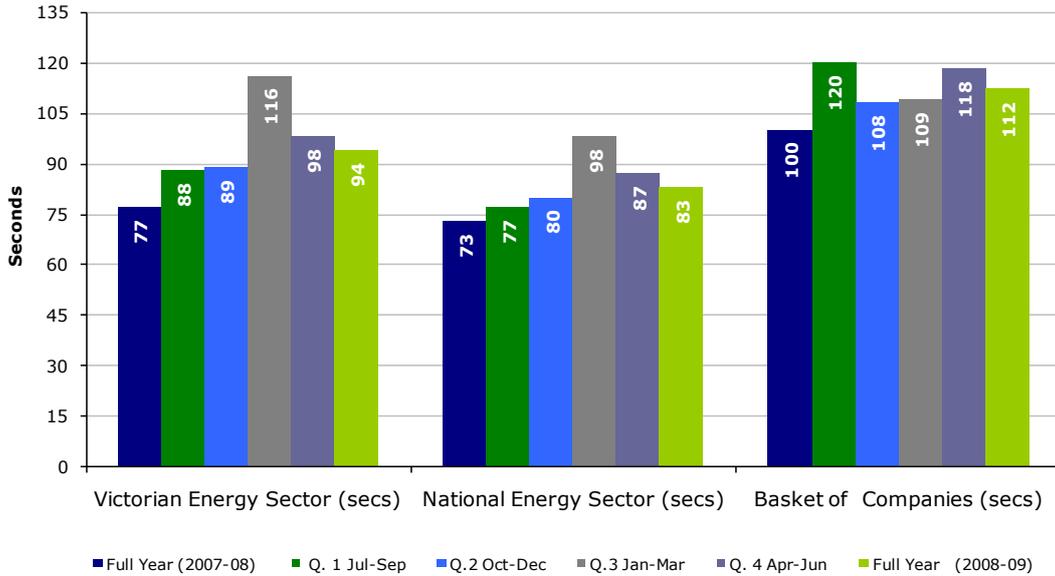
Table 1. Average time to reach an Agent (seconds) - Comparison to Prior Quarter and 2008-09 compared to 2007-08.

	Full Year (2007-08)	2008-09				Full Year (2008-09)
		Q. 1 Jul-Sep	Q.2 Oct-Dec	Q.3 Jan-Mar	Q. 4 Apr-Jun	
Victorian Energy Sector (secs)	77	88	89	116	98	94
National Energy Sector (secs)	73	77	80	98	87	83
Best Vic Energy Company (secs)	Momentum (64 Secs)	Jackgreen (66 secs)	Powerdirect (65 secs)	Jackgreen (59 secs)	Powerdirect (69 secs)	Jackgreen (68 secs)
Basket of Companies (secs)	100	120	108	109	118	112

5+ Seconds Faster	5+ Seconds Slower	No Change
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Note: each quarterly result is rounded, so the average of the four quarters may not match the Full Year result.

Average Connect Time (secs)



Calls Answered within 30 Seconds of any IVR delay

Customers like to reach an Agent within 30 seconds of a phone call being answered. CSBA has measured the incidence of callers reaching an Agent after any interactive voice response (IVR) delay. The data shown in the Table and Chart below compares 2008-09 with the data from 2007-08.

Following any IVR delay, 64% of callers to Victorian Energy Sector companies were connected to an Agent within 30 seconds, a drop of three points on the previous year (67%). The National Energy Sector result demonstrated that 65% of callers were connected to an Agent within 30 seconds (70% previously). At 48%, the Basket of Companies was lower than either the Victorian or National Energy Sectors but was two points better than 2007-08 at 46%.

Within the Victorian Energy Sector, quarterly results for 'Calls Answered within 30 Seconds' varied from 64% in Quarter 1 to 66% in Quarter 4. TRUenergy was the year's best performer, at 84%; Red Energy was the lowest, at 37%. Red Energy continues its poor form again being the lowest performer in 2007-08 at 44% and all quarters in 2008-09.

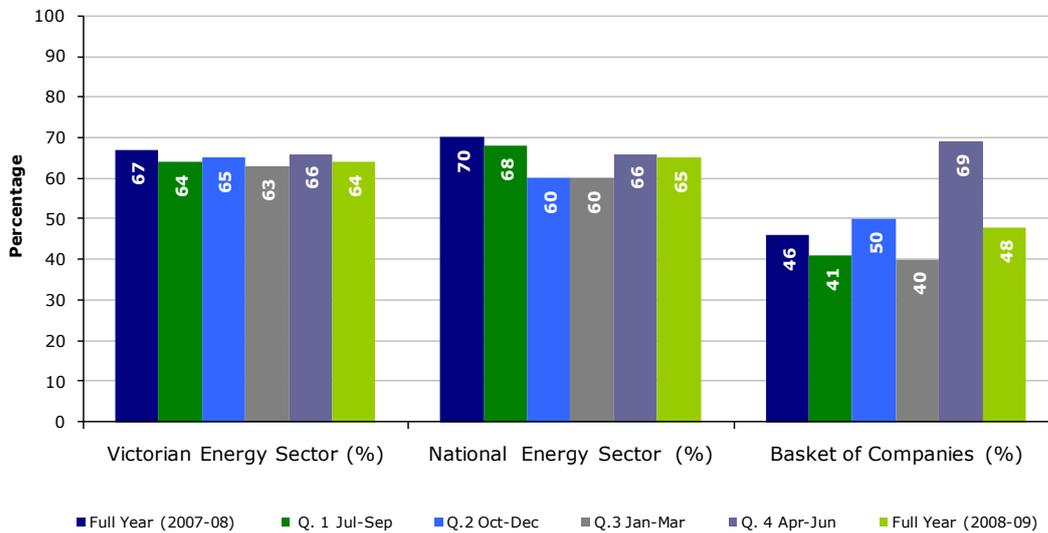
Table 2. % Calls answered within 30 seconds of any IVR delay - Comparison to Prior Quarter and 2008-09 compared with 2007-08.

	Full Year (2007-08)	2008-09				Full Year (2008-09)
		Q. 1 Jul-Sep	Q.2 Oct-Dec	Q.3 Jan-Mar	Q. 4 Apr-Jun	
Victorian Energy Sector (%)	67	64	65	63	66	64
National Energy Sector (%)	70	68	60	60	66	65
Highest Vic Energy Company (%)	Powerdirect (82%)	TRUenergy (89%)	Powerdirect (88%)	TRUenergy (85%)	Country Energy Vic & TRUenergy (both 79%)	TRUenergy (84%)
Lowest Vic Energy Company (%)	Red Energy (44%)	Red Energy (34%)	Red Energy (32%)	Red Energy (41%)	Red Energy (40%)	Red Energy (37%)
Basket of Companies (%)	46	41	50	40	69	48

3+ Points Higher	3+ Points Lower	No Change
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Note: each quarterly result is rounded, so the average of the four quarters may not match the Full Year result.

% Calls answered within 30 seconds of any IVR delay



2. Greeting Quality

Customer Service Benchmarking Australia measures five key Greeting Skills:

- Welcome salutation
- Giving the company name
- Giving the Agent's name
- Making an offer to help the caller
- Sign off

These measures are aggregated to form the Greeting Quality Index.

In most companies the Greeting Quality Index tends to not change drastically between quarters. Agents generally score high in four of the five greeting elements but some have difficulty in the requirement of incorporating an Offer To Help the caller in their standard greeting. This is usually the only area of volatility. A full breakdown of scores obtained on each greeting element by the individual Sectors and Companies is contained in Table 7.

In 2008-09, the average Greeting Quality Index remained stable over the previous year at 91%. Among the Victorian Energy Sector companies the Offer to Help improved marginally from 64% to 66% while the incidence of Agents citing the Company Name (94%) and using an appropriate Sign Off (98%) remained unchanged from previously. Salutation (98%) and Agent Name (97%) were each nominally lower by one point.

The Greeting Quality Index for the National Energy Sector Australia was nominally lower: from 91% in 2007-08 to 90% in 2008-09. Results were one point down across Salutation (98%), Agent Name (98%), Offer to Help (64%) and Sign Off (98%) while Company Name fell by two points to 92%.

Energy Australia Victoria at 95% was the best performer on the Greeting Quality Index in 2008-09 and in the previous year (along with AGL). Energy Australia Victoria has remained a consistent high performer on this measure. At 88% each, Simply Energy and Red Energy recorded the lowest score on the Greeting Quality Index. (Refer to Table 7)

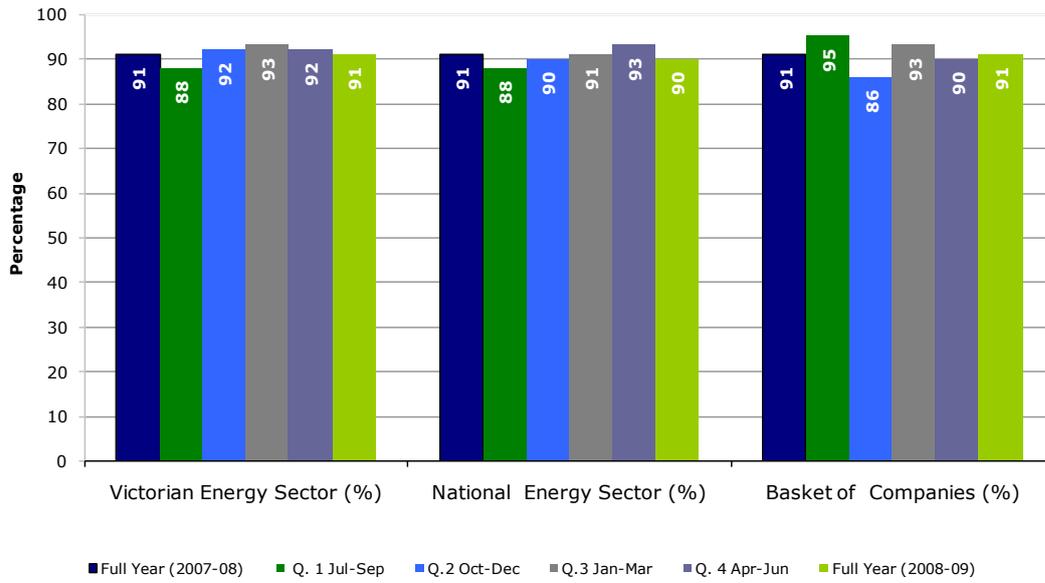
Table 3. Greeting Quality Index - Comparison to Prior Quarter and 2008-09 compared with 2007-08.

	Full Year (2007-08)	2008-09				Full Year (2008-09)
		Q. 1 Jul-Sep	Q.2 Oct-Dec	Q.3 Jan-Mar	Q. 4 Apr-Jun	
Victorian Energy Sector (%)	91	88	92	93	92	91
National Energy Sector (%)	91	88	90	91	93	90
Highest Vic Energy Company	AGL & Energy Australia Vic (both 94%)	TRUenergy (92%)	Red Energy & Energy Australia Vic (95%)	AGL (96%)	Energy Australia Vic (98%)	Energy Australia Vic (95%)
Basket of Companies (%)	91	95	86	93	90	91

3+ Points Higher	3+ Points Lower	No Change
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Note: each quarterly result is rounded, so the average of the four quarters may not match the Full Year result.

Greeting quality index



3. Agent Manner

Customer Service Benchmarking Australia’s survey program includes assessment of the Manner projected by telephone Agents.

Manner is assessed by CSBA using four mutually exclusive ratings:

- Interested, Helpful and Warm (the Best Practice option)
- Businesslike and un-emotive
- Laidback and easygoing
- Disinterested and curt

Research conducted by CSBA indicates that quality of Agent Manner is a critical factor in the successful completion of an enquiry call. If the Agent is interested and helpful, or even businesslike, successful elements of the call, including Enquiry Handling, are more likely to be achieved.

Best Practice Agent Manner

In 2008-09, Agents in the Victorian Energy Sector exhibited Best Practice Manner in 74% of calls which is the same as the previous year. The National Energy Sector fell by three points to 74%.

The Victorian Energy Sector’s Best Practice Manner started at a higher figure of 77% in the Jul-Sep 08 quarter but dropped by the end of the year to 71% in the Apr-Jun 09 quarter – a decline of six points. In contrast, the National Energy Sector recorded a positive upward trend from 74% at the start of the year to 77% in the Apr-Jun 09 quarter – a three point rise. There was considerable volatility within the Basket of Companies which recorded a low of 41% in Oct-Dec 08 to a high of 87% in Apr-Jun 09.

The best Victorian Energy Company was Energy Australia Vic which registered at 84%, but this was seven points lower than Country Energy (91%) in the previous year. Victoria Electricity recorded the lowest score for Best Practice Manner at 66% (see Table 7).

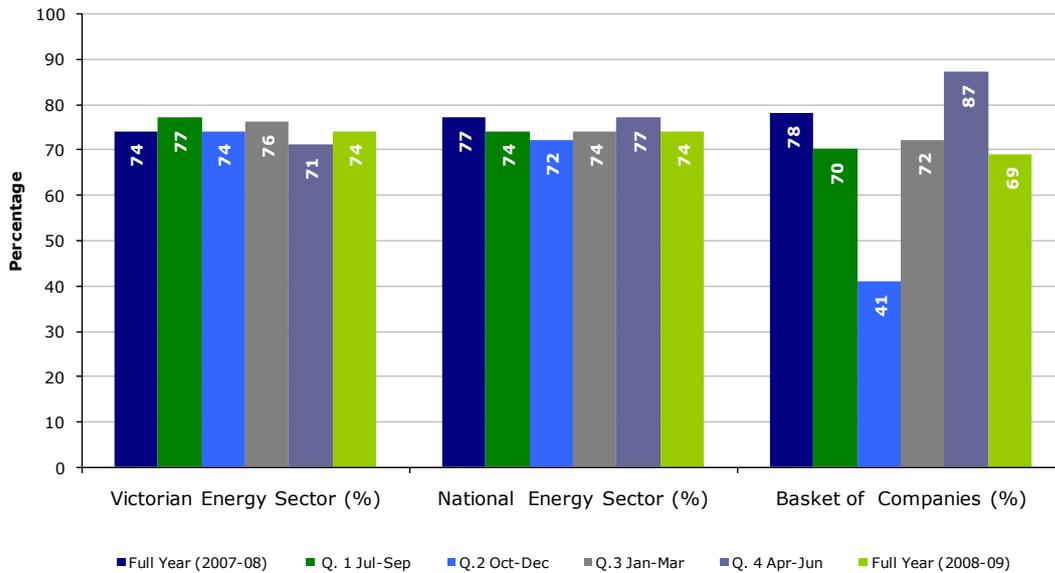
Table 4. % Best practice Agent manner (Interested, Warm and Helpful) - Comparison to Prior Quarter and 2008-09 compared with 2007-08.

	Full Year (2007-08)	2008-09				Full Year (2008-09)
		Q. 1 Jul-Sep	Q.2 Oct-Dec	Q.3 Jan-Mar	Q. 4 Apr-Jun	
Victorian Energy Sector (%)	74	77	74	76	71	74
National Energy Sector (%)	77	74	72	74	77	74
Best Vic Energy Company	Country Energy (91%)	Energy Australia Vic (91%)	Energy Australia Vic (90%)	Powerdirect (87%)	Energy Australia Vic (88%)	Energy Australia Vic (84%)
Basket of Companies (%)	78	70	41	72	87	69

3+ Points Higher	3+ Points Lower	No Change
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Note: each quarterly result is rounded, so the average of the four quarters may not match the Full Year result.

**% Best Practice Agent Manner
(Interested, Warm, Helpful)**



Total Acceptable Agent Manner

The Best Practice and Businesslike Manner scores have been combined to present the Total Acceptable Manner results.

The Victorian Energy Sector improved nominally by one point from 94% in 2007-08 to 95% in 2008-09. The National Energy Sector remained unchanged at 95%.

Agents should project an Acceptable Manner at all contacts: the quarterly results in Table 5 show that Agents in the Victorian Energy Sector projected a Total Acceptable Manner to 95% of callers in each Quarter, meaning that 5% of total callers experienced an Unacceptable Agent Manner throughout the year in 2008-09.

Amongst the Victorian Energy Sector companies results ranged from a high of 98% to a low of 90% for Total Acceptable Manner. Various companies achieved 100% at different times throughout the year. Energy Australia Victoria and TRUenergy, at 98% each, were the best Victorian Energy Sector company performers on Total Acceptable Manner. At 90%, Simply Energy registered the lowest. (Refer to Table 7)

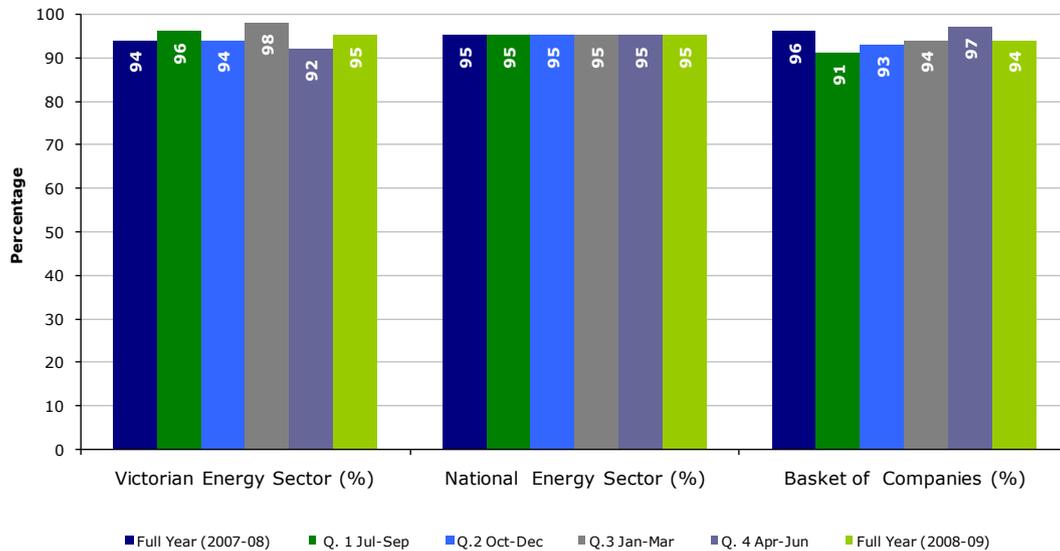
Table 5. % Acceptable Agent Manner - Comparison to Prior Quarter and 2008-09 compared with 2007-08.

	Full Year (2007-08)	2008-09				Full Year (2008-09)
		Q. 1 Jul-Sep	Q.2 Oct-Dec	Q.3 Jan-Mar	Q. 4 Apr-Jun	
Victorian Energy Sector (%)	94	96	94	98	92	95
National Energy Sector (%)	95	95	95	95	95	95
Best Vic Energy Company	Country Energy (100%)	Energy Australia Vic & Victoria Electricity (both 100%)	Country Energy, Energy Australia Vic, Red Energy, & TRUenergy (all 100%)	Jackgreen, Powerdirect, TRUenergy & Victoria Electricity (all 100%)	Energy Australia Vic, Jackgreen, Powderdirect & TRUenergy (all 96%)	Energy Australia Vic & TRUenergy (both 98%)
Basket of Companies (%)	96	91	93	94	97	94

3+ Points Higher	3+ Points Lower	No Change
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Note: each quarterly result is rounded, so the average of the four quarters may not match the Full Year result.

**% Acceptable Agent Manner
(Interested, Warm & Helpful Plus Businesslike)**



4. Enquiry Handling Skills

Customer Service Benchmarking Australia measures four key Enquiry Handling Skills:

- Ability to probe to clarify customer needs
- Product/service knowledge
- Agent provides a clear outcome for the enquiry
- Agent is helpful and courteous

These measures are aggregated to form the Enquiry Handling Index.

Enquiry Handling Skills in the Victorian Energy Sector stabilised over the previous year at 80% (81% in 2007-08). Probed Needs improved by one point to 71%. Both Good Product Knowledge (80%) and Provided a Clear Outcome (80%) fell this year by one and three points respectively. Courteous and Helpful was unchanged at 89% (Refer to Table 7).

The National Energy Sector result was lower by three points to 81%. Probed Needs (70%), Good Product Knowledge (82%) and Provided Clear Outcome (82%) were all lower (Refer to Table 7).

Across the four quarters, Victorian Energy Sector companies recorded scores ranging from 79% to 83% for the Enquiry Skills Index while the National Energy Sector scores ranged from 80% to 82%.

Country Energy Victoria recorded the best Victorian result for the 2008-09 year, at 89%, and achieved the same position in 2007-08 but was marginally higher then, at 90%. The best quarterly performance in the Victorian Energy Sector was also Country Energy Victoria, which achieved 93% in the Oct- Dec 08 quarter. Simply Energy was the lowest scorer on this measure for 2008-09, at 73%.

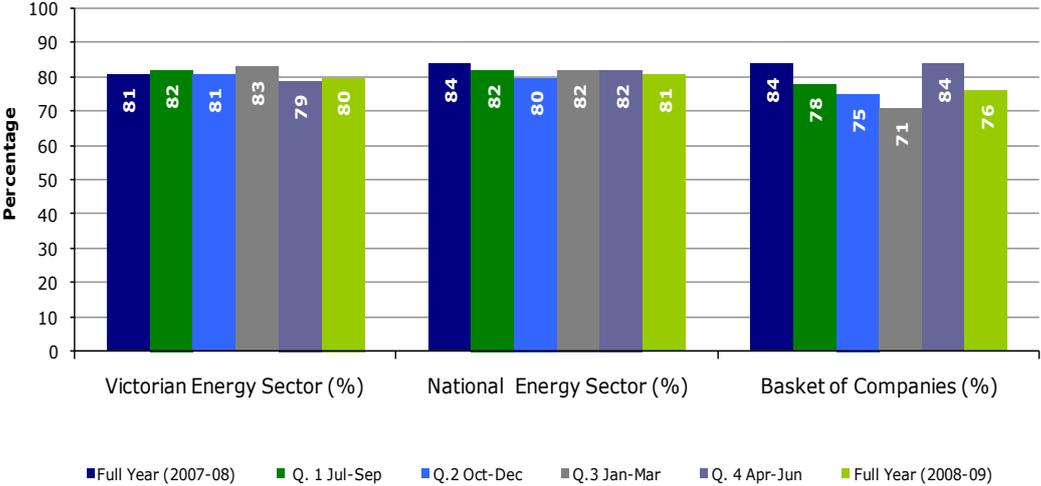
Table 6. % Enquiry Handling Index - Comparison to Prior Quarter and 2008-09 compared to 2007-08.

	Full Year (2007-08)	2008-09				Full Year (2008-09)
		Q. 1 Jul-Sep	Q.2 Oct-Dec	Q.3 Jan-Mar	Q. 4 Apr-Jun	
Victorian Energy Sector (%)	81	82	81	83	79	80
National Energy Sector (%)	84	82	80	82	82	81
Best Vic Energy Company (%)	Country Energy (90%)	Energy Australia Vic & Red Energy (both 88%)	Country Energy Victoria (93%)	Country Energy Victoria (89%)	Country Energy Victoria (88%)	Country Energy Victoria (89%)
Basket of Companies (%)	84	78	75	71	84	76

3+ Points Higher	3+ Points Lower	No Change
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Note: each quarterly result is rounded, so the average of the four quarters may not match the Full Year result.

% Enquiry Handling Index



PART TWO— Victorian Energy Utilities and Hardship Issues

This section of the report shows the scores by Victorian energy companies for hardship calls, against the results for non-hardship calls. The key areas of call centre activity used in this comparison are Enquiry Handling Skills, Agent Best Practice Manner and Total Acceptable Agent Manner.

Connect Time and Greeting Skills are not relevant.

Enquiry Handling Skills

The Bar Chart below compares the Enquiry Handling Skills Index scores achieved for the Victorian Energy Sector companies comparing non-hardship against hardship calls.

The average Enquiry Handling Skills Index for 2008-09 across all ten Victorian Energy Sector companies was similar for both hardship and non hardship calls (81% and 80% respectively). This suggests that in 2008-09 they were treated equally.

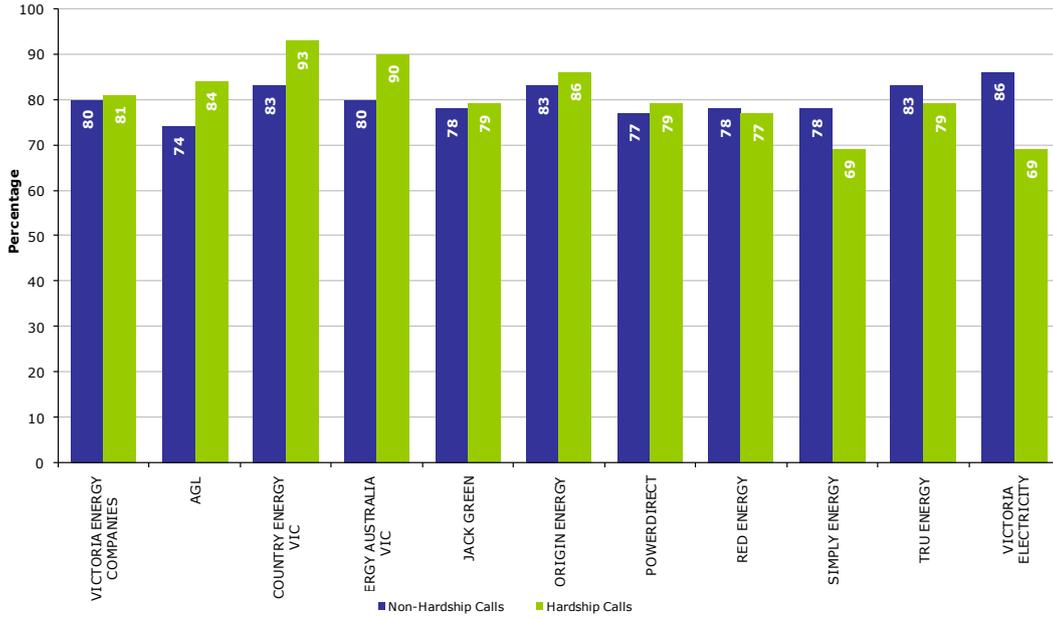
A number of Victorian Energy Sector companies had superior Enquiry Skills when handling hardships calls. At 93% and 10 points better at dealing with hardship calls compared with non-hardship calls, Country Energy Victoria exhibited above average Enquiry Handling Skills. This was followed by Energy Australia Vic at 90% (10 points better); Origin Energy was 86% (three points better) and then AGL at 84% (10 points better). Powerdirect was marginally behind the average at 79% but was two points better when dealing with hardship calls.

Poorer skills were displayed by four energy companies when dealing with hardship cases these are: Red Energy (one point lower at 77%), TRUenergy (four points lower at 79%), Victorian Electricity (17 points lower at 69%) and Simply Energy (nine points lower at 69%).

Agents within the Victorian Energy Sector showed themselves to be more Courteous and Helpful with Hardship calls (91%) than non hardship calls (87%) but slightly less likely to fully Probe the Needs of hardship calls (71%) versus Non-Hardship (73%). Agents displayed marginally better Product Knowledge with Hardship calls (81%) than non-hardship (80%). Clear Outcome to enquiries was marginally lower for hardship calls (80%) than Non-hardship (81%) calls.

Examining individual energy companies reveals that Red Energy, Simply Energy, Victoria Electricity and TRUenergy (except for Courteous and Helpful) exhibit a poorer level of Enquiry Handling Skills in their management of hardship calls compared to non-hardship calls. A full breakdown on how Agents from each energy company performed on each enquiry criterion is available in Table 8.

Enquiry Handling Index (Hardship Calls compared with Non - Hardship calls) 2008-09



Agent Manner

The Manner an Agent displays when talking to a caller with a hardship enquiry is important, even paramount. The following Bar Charts show scores for Best Practice Manner and Total Acceptable Manner.

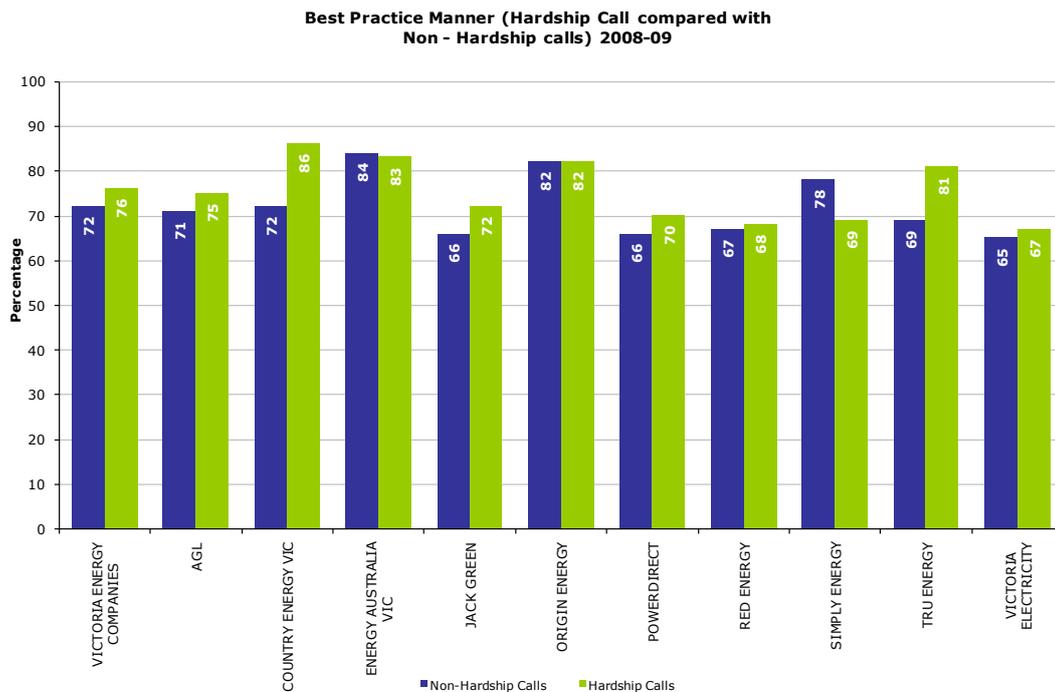
Agent Displayed Best Practice Manner

The Chart below shows that Best Practice Agent Manner (Interested, Warm and Helpful) exhibited by the Victorian Energy Sector was better, by four points, for hardship calls at 76% when compared to 72% for non-hardship calls. This suggests that Agent Manner was impacted by the nature of the call and a more compassionate approach to the caller used.

Companies which were better at displaying Best Practice Manner with hardship calls were: Country Energy Victoria (14 points better at 86%), TRUenergy (12 points better at 81%), Jackgreen Energy (six points better at 72%), AGL (four points better at 75%), Powerdirect (four points better at 70%), Victoria Electricity (two points better at 67%) and Red Energy (one point better at 68%).

Companies that did not display Best Practice Manner at a higher level for hardship calls are: Energy Australia Vic (one point worse at 83%) and Simply Energy (nine points worse at 69%).

Origin Energy at 82% displayed a similar level of Best Practice Manner to both non-hardship and hardship calls.



Agent Displayed Acceptable Manner (Best Practice plus Businesslike)

Total Acceptable Manner was more prevalent with hardship calls at 97% than non-hardship (93%).

In 2008-09 Country Energy Vic and TRUenergy displayed perfect levels (100%) of Acceptable Manner when dealing with hardship calls. At lower levels, but still better for hardship calls were: AGL (three points better, at 95%), Jackgreen (two points better, at 96%), Red Energy (12 points better, at 98%), Simply Energy (three points better, at 92%) and Victoria Electricity (11 points better, at 97%) were much better when dealing with hardship calls. Energy Australia Victoria at a high 98% recorded no difference.

Powerdirect showed a poorer level of Acceptable Manner to hardship calls at 94% (three points lower than non-hardship calls). Origin Energy at 96% was also marginally worse, by one point, when dealing with hardship calls.

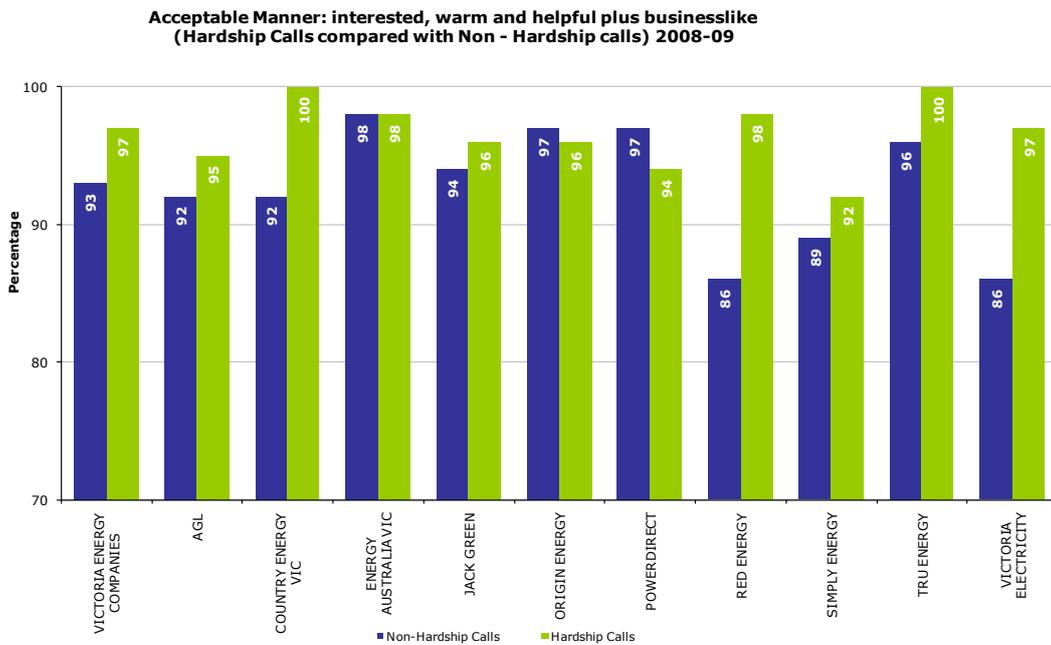


Table 7. Key Measures 2008-09 (highest and lowest result for each measure)

	VICTORIAN ENERGY SECTOR		NATIONAL ENERGY SECTOR		AGL VIC	COUNTRY ENERGY VIC	ENERGY AUSTRALIA VIC	JACKGREEN ENERGY	ORIGIN ENERGY	POWERDIRECT	RED ENERGY	SIMPLY ENERGY	TRU ENERGY	VICTORIA ELECTRICITY
	07-08	08-09	07-08	08-09	08-09	08-09	08-09	08-09	08-09	08-09	08-09	08-09	08-09	08-09
CONNECTION TO AN AGENT														
Average Connect Time (sec)	77	94	73	83	118	94	103	68	99	73	92	103	102	87
% Calls answered within 30 seconds during	67	64	70	65	59	68	58	68	67	74	37	68	84	60
GREETING QUALITY														
Av Greeting Quality Index (%)	91	91	91	90	91	90	95	91	90	90	88	88	93	90
% Salutation	99	98	99	98	98	99	97	100	98	100	96	95	100	97
% Company Name	94	94	94	92	97	96	98	92	89	97	83	91	97	95
% Agent Name	98	97	99	98	97	100	100	96	98	95	99	91	99	100
% Offer To Help	64	66	65	64	67	59	80	69	68	58	66	64	72	59
% Sign off	98	98	99	98	98	98	100	98	98	95	98	100	99	99
AGENT MANNER														
% Interested, warm, helpful	74	74	77	74	72	80	84	69	82	68	68	73	75	66
% Businesslike	20	21	18	21	20	16	14	26	14	27	25	18	23	26
% Total Acceptable	94	95	95	95	93	96	98	95	96	95	93	91	98	92
ENQUIRY HANDLING SKILLS														
Enquiry Handling Index	81	80	84	81	77	89	85	78	84	78	78	73	81	78
% Probed Needs	70	71	73	70	65	80	80	71	74	68	63	64	76	68
% Good Product Knowledge	81	80	85	82	76	92	87	78	84	77	80	68	79	79
% Provided Clear Outcome	83	80	85	82	77	89	82	79	86	80	81	73	78	78
% Courteous/Helpful	89	89	91	90	89	94	92	84	92	88	86	86	91	86

Highest result Lowest result

Table 8. Key Measures 2008-09 (non-hardship calls compared to hardship calls)

	VIC ENERGY COMPANIES		AGL		COUNTRY ENERGY		ENERGY AUSTRALIA		JACKGREEN ENERGY		ORIGIN ENERGY		POWERDIRECT		RED ENERGY		SIMPLY ENERGY		TRUENERGY		VICTORIA ELECTRICITY	
	NON-HARDSHIP	HARDSHIP	NON-HARDSHIP	HARDSHIP	NON-HARDSHIP	HARDSHIP	NON-HARDSHIP	HARDSHIP	NON-HARDSHIP	HARDSHIP	NON-HARDSHIP	HARDSHIP	NON-HARDSHIP	HARDSHIP	NON-HARDSHIP	HARDSHIP	NON-HARDSHIP	HARDSHIP	NON-HARDSHIP	HARDSHIP	NON-HARDSHIP	HARDSHIP
Agent Manner																						
% Interested, warm, helpful	72	76	71	75	72	86	84	83	66	72	82	82	66	70	67	68	78	69	69	81	65	67
% Businesslike	21	21	20	20	19	14	13	15	28	24	15	13	32	24	19	30	11	23	27	19	22	31
% Total Acceptable	93	97	92	95	92	100	98	98	94	96	97	96	97	94	86	98	89	92	96	100	86	97
Enquiry Handling Skills																						
Enquiry Handling Index	80	81	74	84	83	93	80	90	78	79	83	86	77	79	78	77	78	69	83	79	86	69
% Probed Needs	73	71	61	75	78	82	73	85	72	70	72	78	74	64	61	64	67	62	83	69	84	54
% Product Knowledge	80	81	73	84	86	96	82	92	77	80	82	89	76	78	81	80	78	62	81	77	84	74
% Clear Outcome	81	80	75	82	83	94	78	85	77	81	86	84	76	82	83	80	78	69	81	75	89	67
% Courteous/Helpful	87	91	87	93	86	100	87	98	85	83	93	91	82	92	86	86	89	85	88	94	89	82

3+ points higher

3+ points lower

Australian Utilities Surveyed

The main principles underpinning the research carried out are outlined below.

INDUSTRY	COMPANY
AIRLINES	QANTAS
BANKS	NAB
INSURANCE	RACV
TELCOS	OPTUS
ENERGY RETAILERS	ACTEW AGL
ENERGY RETAILERS	AGL CANBERRA
ENERGY RETAILERS	AGL VICTORIA
ENERGY RETAILERS	ALINTA
ENERGY RETAILERS	AURORA
ENERGY RETAILERS	COUNTRY ENERGY
ENERGY RETAILERS	COUNTRY ENERGY VIC
ENERGY RETAILERS	ENERGEX
ENERGY RETAILERS	ENERGYAUSTRALIA
ENERGY RETAILERS	ENERGYAUSTRALIA VIC
ENERGY RETAILERS	ERGON
ENERGY RETAILERS	INTEGRAL ENERGY
ENERGY RETAILERS	JACKGREEN
ENERGY RETAILERS	SIMPLY ENERGY
ENERGY RETAILERS	ORIGIN ENERGY
ENERGY RETAILERS	POWERDIRECT
ENERGY RETAILERS	RED ENERGY
ENERGY RETAILERS	SYNERGY
ENERGY RETAILERS	TRUENERGY
ENERGY RETAILERS	VICTORIA ELECTRICITY

Research Methodology

Call Process

- Calls were made over ten weeks to each entity using questions designed for each industry sector
- Each entity was called between Monday and Friday (excluding public holidays) during business hours. An engaged response was followed up with two further calls before attempt to contact was abandoned
- Call lists and questions asked were varied between interviewers and by time of day to minimise the possibility of call centre staff recognising interviewers
- Assessment criteria rated on every call are listed in Appendix B below.

Customer Expectation Research

In order to assist with questionnaire development and analysis results, **Customer Service Benchmarking Australia** conducts group interviews. The group interviews continue to indicate the following core customer expectations when contacting enquiry centres:

- Phones should preferably be answered by a 'human being' within 30 seconds of the first ring
- Recorded messages were generally not liked, including IVR systems that required the customer to enter a number of keystrokes to reach the required area
- Agent should, in most instances, be able to resolve the matter without transfer to another agent
- Components of greeting including salutation, organisation and agent name, an offer to assist, and a formal sign-off were thought to be desirable; of these, use of the agent's name was particularly desirable
- Callers respond better to an agent who projects an interested manner
- Providing a clear resolution at the end of the call is critical to minimising misconceptions and possible later callbacks.

Indices and Sampling

The concepts of 'response-greeting quality indices', 'enquiry resolution quality indices' and 'customer satisfaction grids' were developed exclusively by **Customer Service Benchmarking Australia**, and remain its property. The quality of agent response index weightings requires the five components of the greeting to be used for a perfect score on a particular call. These components are equally weighted.

The weightings given to the various components of the customer satisfaction grid are necessarily subjective. The 'getting through' axis relates to connection times and the greeting components; the 'service delivery' axis relates to enquiry resolution skills elements and agent manner.

Sample sizes are adequate to draw broad conclusions about the relative performance of individual entities in terms of getting through on the telephone. Nonetheless, care should be taken when interpreting variations in results because of the possibility of sampling error. A poor response received by **Customer Service Benchmarking Australia** is one that 'real customers' may also experience. Our philosophy is that an organisation's response is only as good as the weakest link in its customer communication chain.