



Engaging your Customers on Choice

Presentation to the Essential Services Commission
Customer Engagement Seminar

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A cautionary tale



DO NOT INSTALL SMART METER

I DECLINE TO HAVE A 'SMART METER'
FITTED UNTIL AFTER THE STATE
GOVERNMENT HAS COMPLETED THE
'SMART METER' REVIEW PROCESS.

THANK YOU.

Sparrowsinoz
SMARTPEOPLES ALLIANCE REJECTING the ROLL OUT WITH SMARTMETERS

Home About Us Contact Us Latest Updates What does a Smart Meter look like?

HALT THE SMARTMETER ROLL OUT

SPARROWS requests that legislation be brought forth in Victoria to immediately

HALT THE SMARTMETER ROLL OUT

and an

INDEPENDENT HEALTH REVIEW

be carried out to determine the cumulative effects of manmade microwave radiation in the environment.

Customer service and consumer protection

All cases received by the Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria), 2009-10

	Cases	Enquiries	Complaints
Total	42,505	4,075	38,430
Electricity	28,843	2,575	26,268
Gas	10,594	498	10,096
Dual fuel*	360	3	357
Water	1,876	221	1,655
Other Industry**	832	778	54



How will this look in 2014?

Customer Service Code – sections for review

- the frequency of meter readings and estimations (4.2, 4.3)
- content of bills and presentation of charges (4.5, 4.6)
- payment difficulties and hardship provisions, e.g.
- additional requirement that businesses assist customers in hardship programs to choose the most appropriate tariff;
- ability of customers experiencing unanticipated hardship or payment difficulties to move off a high-cost tariff;
- policies, practices and procedures to respond to enquiries in relation to tariff options (12.1)
- provision of usage/billing history information to consumers to facilitate choice (12.7)
- content of customer charters (15)

Choice, savings and price increases

If your prices are to increase at the same time as choice is introduced, how will this be interpreted or received?

What level of savings do your customers expect or need to see on their bill for them to feel that the time and energy taken to switch was worthwhile?

How will customers who have chosen know whether they are better off than they would otherwise have been?



Low income and vulnerable consumers

- What resources/tools/materials would help them to help their clients to choose the most appropriate tariff
- What the consumption profiles of their clients are like
- What implementation problems they can foresee, if any
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- Advice on how best to communicate with these consumer groups, including:
 - information channels (who/what will deliver the information)
 - type of content (what will the information say)
 - form will the communications will take (eg. Print, face-to-face, visual, AV etc)

Engaging customers – four suggestions

1. Design your engagement process to target a range of consumer groups and to elicit high-quality feedback

go beyond
consultative
committees

different engagement
methodologies for
different customer
groups

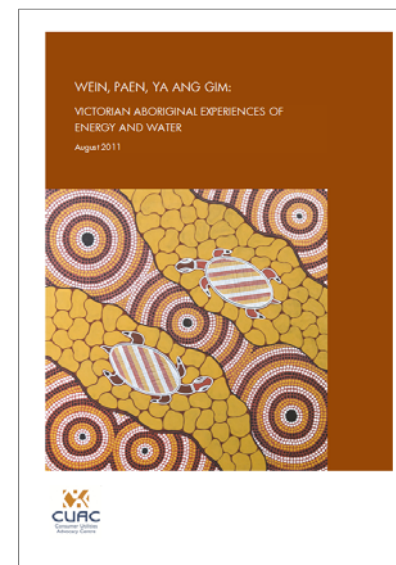
liaise with welfare
service providers and
advocates

Engaging customers – four suggestions

2. Consult the research that's already been done



- customers were 'overwhelmed' by rising utility prices and 'bills piling up on top of each other'
- expressed a 'sense of helplessness at being unable to cope'
- were frustrated when they put significant effort into keeping their costs down but don't see this reflected in bills



Launch on December 5

Engaging customers – four suggestions

3. Discuss your plans with consumer advocates

Individuals often lack the means — time, money and know-how — to represent their views as consumers in policy and regulatory forums [...]

Consumer policy advocates can overcome this problem by ensuring that consumer interests are represented in both policy and regulator decision making. Having effective consumer involvement in these forums will reduce the risk of regulators and ministers making poor decisions because of poor information on consumer preferences.

- Productivity Commission (2011) *Australia's Urban Water Sector*

Engaging customers – four suggestions

4. Allow opportunities for deliberation

- Deliberative processes give lay citizens the opportunity to consider facts and perspectives, talk with each other, and evaluate opinions and options.
- Examples include citizens' panels, televotes and deliberative surveys.
- Some issues that have been subject to deliberative processes in Australia include: urban planning in a rapidly growing Perth; the Australian Capital Territory response to climate change and container deposit legislation in New South Wales.