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ENERGY RETAILERS

COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE REPORT –
CUSTOMER SERVICE
2008-09

DECEMBER 2009

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1.1 Purpose of the report

The Essential Services Commission (the Commission) has been reporting on the performance of the Victorian energy retailers since mid-1990s.¹

The reports bring transparency and accountability to the performance of the energy retailers by focussing on those indicators which show how retailers are treating their customers. The reports enable trend analysis over a period of time and comparison between the retailers in providing services to their customers.

Particular attention is given to retailers' performance when dealing with more vulnerable customers, such as those experiencing short or long term difficulties with paying their bills. This is because these customers are often less confident in negotiating their options and rights with their energy utility. The Commission particularly monitors assistance provided by retailers to ensure that these customers are assisted to stay connected to supply.

The four categories of performance assessed in this report are:

- **Billing and Credit Management:**
provides details of estimated billing and examines the credit management policies of retailers by monitoring trends in refundable advances and direct debit defaults.
- **Financial Hardship Programs:**
evaluates the effectiveness of retailers' programs and payment plans in assisting customers in financial hardship as well as state-funded relief grants and concessions available to assist customers with financial difficulties.
- **Disconnections:**
examines the credit management policies of retailers by the rates of disconnection and reconnection of customers for non-payment of bills, particularly for customers with financial difficulties.
- **Call Centre Performance and Complaints:**
considers customers' satisfaction with the retail service through the accessibility and responsiveness of retailers to customer enquiries and complaints.

¹ Integrated distribution and retail performance reports were published by the previous Office of the Regulator-General until the establishment of the Essential Services Commission. The Commission progressively separated the reports in line with the industry developments.

A separate report, *Comparative Performance Report – Pricing and the Competitive Market 2008-09*, deals with the price of energy services and the state of the competitive market.

All reports are published on the Commission's website, www.esc.vic.gov.au.

1.2 Data Types, Sources and Integrity

Data in this report is primarily collected from energy retailers. Additional data is provided by the Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) (EWOV) and the Department of Human Services (DHS).

The *Electricity Industry Act 2000* (the Electricity Act) and the *Gas Industry Act 2001* (the Gas Act) require energy retailers to comply with certain service standards and procedures. These service standards and procedures are set out primarily in regulatory instruments, including the *Energy Retail Code* and the *Code of Conduct for Marketing Retail Energy in Victoria*.²

The performance indicators reported by the retailers address key obligations set out in these regulatory instruments and the energy retailers are required to report in accordance with *the Information Specification (Service Performance) for Victorian Energy Retailers*.³

Some of the performance indicators reported by the retailers were agreed by all jurisdictional energy retailers for implementation from 2008. Data in this 2008-09 report includes these indicators, where applicable. Future reporting will allow more comprehensive trend analysis after more than one financial year of data is collected.

The call centre performance information reported by retailers is supplemented by independent market research conducted by Customer Service Benchmarking Australia (CSBA).

Prior to publication, this report was circulated to all retailers with an invitation to comment on any aspects of the report. Few retailers responded. The Commission has incorporated their comments where appropriate.

1.3 AGL and Reporting Impact

The Commission has separately reported on significant problems with AGL's computer systems and related processes.⁴ As noted in that report, these problems resulted in a widespread and persistent failure of the billing systems, and the

² Available from the Commission's website, <http://www.esc.vic.gov.au>

³ The specification is available at <http://www.esc.vic.gov.au/public/Energy/Regulation+and+Compliance/Codes+and+Guidelines/Information+specifications+for+service+performance>

⁴ Essential Services Commission, 2009, *Summary Audit Report - Regulatory Audit of AGL Energy Limited, August 2009*

inability of the call centres to respond to the volume of complaints about billing and other problems. This has affected the data in this report in many ways:

- In some areas, the energy industry's performance as a whole looks worse than it otherwise would if AGL data was excluded
- AGL was unable to provide accurate data against several performance indicators for 2007-08, including estimated accounts, direct debits and call centre data. This affects the Commission's ability to perform time series analysis of some measures.
- AGL's performance against some of the performance indicators has been affected by the issues it experienced with its billing system. In particular, this has led to a decrease in its call handling performance, and an increase in the number of complaints made by its customers.
- Because of its system problems, AGL suspended disconnections for a period in 2007-08. The consequent overall rise in 2008-09 suggests increased disconnections by the industry, when it primarily reflects AGL resuming normal activity.
- AGL was requiring refundable advances from customers incorrectly. The number of refundable advances therefore is higher than it should be.

The Commission has reported all data in this report as it was provided. Where trend analysis is affected by the absence of, or discrepancies in, data provided by AGL, this is noted where relevant.

1.4 Energy Market

Australian Governments have implemented reforms in the gas and electricity markets by introducing competition into electricity generation and electricity and gas retailing, and regulating access to network infrastructure. The National Electricity Market (NEM) interconnects Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland, Tasmania and the ACT, and facilitates competition in the wholesale electricity trading market. Victoria's natural gas network is interconnected with New South Wales, Tasmania and South Australia.

There are fourteen energy retailers currently active in the Victorian competitive market, some of whom have a long history in the previously franchised market (formerly 'local' retailers) and others who have entered since the early 2000s as the market opened up to competition.

Retailers active in selling electricity and/or gas to small business and domestic customers during 2008-09 were:⁵

⁵ Licensed retailers not actively marketing to small business and domestic customers include Aurora Energy, Auspower, Cogent Energy, Diamond Energy, Dodo Power & Gas, and ERM Power Retail.

Electricity

- AGL
- Australian Power & Gas
- Click Energy
- Country Energy
- Diamond Energy
- Energy Australia
- Jackgreen Energy
- Momentum Energy
- Neighbourhood Energy
- Origin Energy
- Powerdirect
- Red Energy
- Simply Energy
- TRUenergy.
- Victoria Electricity

Gas

- AGL
- Australian Power & Gas
- Origin Energy
- Red Energy
- Simply Energy
- TRUenergy.
- Victoria Electricity

Customer numbers for electricity and gas retailers are shown in Table 1.1 and Table 1.2.⁶ The Commission publishes customer numbers for all retailers with over 500 customers.

Origin Energy (Citipower) and Origin Energy (Powercor) are reported separately to show historic trends. With the changes in the market resulting in Origin Energy's customer base expanding outside its previous local areas, the Commission will consider reporting Origin Energy as one business in 2009-10.

⁶ Customer numbers, which are provided by the retailers, are calculated as the average throughout 2008-09.

Table 1.1 Average electricity customer numbers
2008-09

	<i>Domestic</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>Total</i>
AGL Sales	550,036	70,644	620,680
Australian Power & Gas	41,117	0	41,117
Click Energy	974	63	1,037
Country Energy	60,183	13,470	73,653
Energy Australia	5,538	433	5,971
Jackgreen	2,677	0	2,677
Momentum	1,564	5,792	7,356
Neighbourhood Energy	19,472	0	19,472
Origin Energy (CP)	117,514	27,264	144,778
Origin Energy (PC)	460,115	62,961	523,076
Powerdirect	18,302	14,696	32,998
Red Energy	127,138	3,382	130,520
Simply Energy	155,542	10,773	166,315
TRUenergy	503,094	67,534	570,628
TRUenergy Yallourn	0	526	526
Victoria Electricity	163,970	10,827	174,797
Other	61	895	956
All Retailers	2,227,297	289,260	2,516,557

Table 1.2 Average gas customer numbers
2008-09

	<i>Domestic</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>Total</i>
AGL Sales	480,064	11,811	491,875
Origin Energy (Gas)	524,818	12,858	537,676
TRUenergy	433,642	19,271	452,913
Australian Power & Gas	29,600	0	29,600
Red Energy	49,390	203	49,593
Simply Energy	131,754	1,817	133,571
Victoria Electricity	117,044	1,564	118,608
Energy Australia	4,669	43	4,712
All Retailers	1,770,981	47,567	1,818,548

Figure 1.1 shows the market share of each retailer for the residential and business electricity markets. AGL, Origin Energy and TRUenergy, who were the previously incumbent retailers, continue to hold the largest residential electricity market share (73 per cent). This proportion has steadily declined since early 2000 and is down from 77 per cent in 2007-08. Simply Energy and Victoria Electricity are the next largest retailers, with 7 per cent of the market.

The market share percentages are similar in the business electricity market, with 79 per cent held by AGL, Origin Energy and TRUenergy, which is up from 78 per cent in 2007-08. Of the remainder, Powerdirect and Country Energy hold 5 per cent of the business electricity market.

Figure 1.1 Customer Market Share – Electricity
2008-09

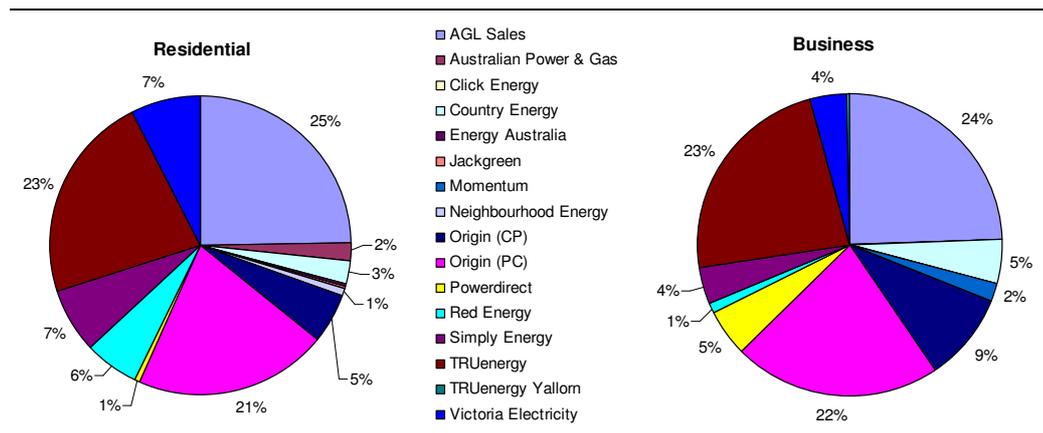
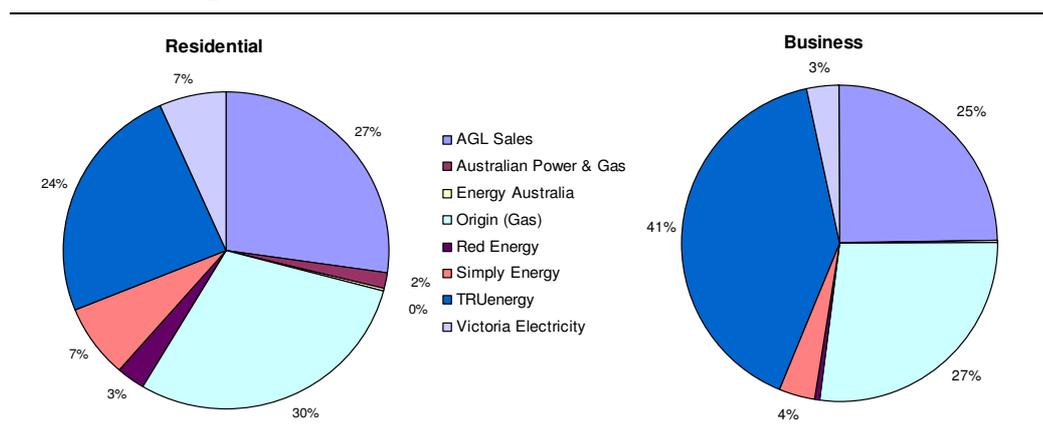


Figure 1.2 shows the market share of each retailer for the residential and business gas markets. It correlates with the residential electricity market, although AGL, Origin Energy and TRUenergy hold a greater market share in this market (81 per cent), which is down from 85 per cent in 2007-08. There has been limited penetration by other than AGL, Origin Energy and TRUenergy in the business gas market, as they hold a total of 93 per cent of business customers.

Figure 1.2 Customer Market Share – Gas
2008-09



1.5 Issues for 2010

Overall, this report shows a good performance across the industry as a whole in 2008-09 against most indicators.

The information provided on assistance to customers through the financial hardship programs raises some questions, even though there is only one year of data.

In early 2010 the Commission will investigate the extent to which retailers are continuing to assist vulnerable customers to pay their bills and maintain access to supply. In particular, the Commission will investigate:

- the retailers' financial hardship programs, looking specifically at why such a high proportion of customers who exit the program do so because they do not comply with the requirements of the program;
- whether retailers are using the Utility Relief Grants Scheme instead of providing direct assistance to their customers, through budget instalment plans and other measures; and
- the incidence of direct debit defaults.

The Commission will continue to monitor systemic regulatory issues arising from customer complaints reported through EWOV and marketing conduct activity.

1.6 Structure of the Report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 reports on aspects of the retailers' billing and credit management practices, including the extent of estimated billing and direct debit defaults and the use of refundable advances.
- Chapter 3 considers the performance and effectiveness of retailers' financial hardship programs and the State-funded relief grants and concessions which assist customers with financial difficulties.
- Chapter 4 examines disconnections and reconnection of both residential and business customers for non-payment of bills. Particular attention is paid to disconnections and reconnections of residential customers likely to be facing financial difficulties.
- Chapter 5 examines customers' satisfaction with energy retailers' service, by reporting on call centre performance and complaints, as well as complaints to EWOV.

Appendices A to D set out the tables which provide further data which has informed the commentary in the report, along with graphs showing the trend in performance, where available, for individual retailers over the past five years

2.1 Overall findings

The use of estimated accounts rose in 2008-09. This is mostly due to AGL not reporting its data for much of 2007-08, which resulted in a lower figure than the true result. Accounting for this anomaly, estimated accounts in 2008-09 were issued at a similar level to 2007-08 – approximately 7 per cent of residential electricity customers would receive an estimated bill each quarter. There is quite a high level of estimated accounts being issued to business customers.

Direct debit defaults increased slightly in 2008-09, but remain at a very small level overall. There are some retailers with a smaller customer base in Victoria, notably Neighbourhood Energy, Momentum, Jackgreen, Australian Power & Gas and Country Energy, who reported much higher levels of direct debit defaults on electricity bills than the industry average. Red Energy and Australian Power & Gas also reported higher levels of defaults on gas bills.

Most retailers do not use refundable advances. There was a marked increase in their use by AGL in 2008-09.

2.2 Why report these indicators?

Retailers are sometimes required to send estimated accounts to customers due to circumstances beyond the retailer's control, such as where properties are not accessible to distributors for meter reading.⁷

As a general rule though, customers should not receive estimated accounts in place of an actual meter read, unless they have directly agreed to an estimated account. This is because estimations are considered to be an inaccurate method of billing a customer since actual consumption, once confirmed with a meter read, may be substantially more than estimated. Unexpectedly larger accounts can cause temporary affordability difficulties for some customers.

Direct debit defaults can indicate potential financial hardship because the money is obviously not available in a customer's account when the bill falls due.⁸ While a certain level of defaults arising from administrative errors or customer oversight

⁷ For a more detailed investigation into the circumstances leading to estimated accounts, see the *Special Investigation – Retail Energy Estimated Accounts December 2008* report on the Commission's website, www.esc.vic.gov.au.

⁸ The data is to be reported on customers who default more than twice on a direct debit arrangement.

can be expected, an upward trend may suggest that a greater number of customers are having difficulty paying their energy bills.

Refundable advances or security deposits are used in some cases by retailers to reduce the risk of non-payment by customers. As they add to the overall debt of customers, the Commission expects that they should only be used in exceptional circumstances.

2.3 Estimated Accounts

Residential customers receive on average four bills a year, as the majority of these customers are billed quarterly. The data reported by all retailers show that, in 2008-09, approximately 730,000 estimated bills were issued. This equates to about 28 estimated bills per 100 customers for this year or around 7 estimated bills per 100 customers each quarter. That is, approximately 7 per cent of customers received an estimated bill each quarter in 2008-09.⁹

Retailers reported an overall increase in the use of estimated accounts during 2008-09 in electricity, and a steady increase since 2005-06. The outcomes are mixed, with some retailers showing a steady decrease in the use of estimated billing (for example, Country Energy), while others, such as Origin Energy, have a continual increase since 2005-06.

AGL's huge increase in the extent of estimated accounts contributed significantly to the overall industry increase.

For gas, the upward trend has been slight.

In 2008-09, for the first time, the Commission received estimated accounts data split into residential and business customers. This data shows that small business customers are much more likely to receive an estimated account, with an average of 58.38 per 100 customers. The retailers did not explain the reasons for this higher level.

Detailed information is shown in Table A.3 in Appendix A.

Table 2.1 shows that in 2008-09:

- Approximately 28 estimated accounts per 100 customers were issued in 2008-09, an increase from 2007-08 (22 per 100 customers). The 2007-08 result was lower than the actual figure, as AGL did not report data for more than half of that year. Due to this anomaly, the rate of estimated accounts has remained steady during 2008-09.
- Country Energy and Simply Energy recorded a significant fall in the level of estimated accounts.

⁹ This figure is consistent with the Commission's earlier findings in the *Special Investigation – Retail Energy Estimated Accounts December 2008*

- Origin Energy's use of estimated accounts has doubled since 2005-06.

Table 2.1 Estimated Accounts – Electricity
Residential and Business customers, 2005-06 to 2008-09

<i>Retailer</i>	<i>Total Estimated Accounts</i>				<i>Estimated Accounts per 100 customers</i>			
	<i>2005-06*</i>	<i>2006-07</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>	<i>2005-06*</i>	<i>2006-07</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>
AGL Sales	158,250	149,654	60,838	190,794	22.03	22.61	10.46	30.74
Australian Power & Gas	-	11	3,028	5,301	-	0.16	13.29	12.89
Click Energy	-	-	51	0	-	-	6.75	0.00
Country Energy	31,938	36,212	19,806	11,038	48.57	47.14	27.25	14.99
Jackgreen	-	-	470	488	-	-	15.74	18.23
Neighbourhood Energy	-	1	0	0	-	1.59	0.00	0.00
Origin Energy (CP&PC)	135,056	139,421	203,092	289,695	21.41	22.46	28.91	43.38
Powerdirect	0	0	0	6,299	-	-	-	19.09
Red Energy	1350	2288	13741	17,706	2.14	2.55	12.52	13.57
Simply Energy	-	N/A	56,627	41,144	-	N/A	35.81	24.74
TRUenergy	112,922	139,775	171,945	159,083	20.15	25.78	30.7	27.88
Victoria Electricity	1,274	2,987	8,677	7,378	2.74	3.14	6.16	4.22
Total	440,790	470,349	538,275	728,926	19.56	20.94	22.01	28.95

* For the purposes of comparison, 2005-06 data has been annualised from six months of data collected.

Table 2.2 shows that most retailers reported lower levels of estimated gas accounts than in 2007-08, with TRUenergy and Origin Energy reporting over 30,000 less estimated accounts each in 2008-09.

AGL was the only retailer that reported a level of estimated gas accounts well above the industry average, with 36.91 per 100 customers. This was also well above its previous performance, even allowing for the anomaly of its 2007-08 figures.

Estimated gas accounts for business consumers are used more than for electricity consumers. 99 estimated accounts were issued per 100 business gas consumers, compared with 22 per 100 residential consumers. More information on this breakdown is available in Table A.4 in Appendix A.

Table 2.2 Estimated Accounts – Gas
Residential and Business customers, 2004-05 to 2008-09

<i>Retailer</i>	<i>Total Estimated Accounts</i>					<i>Estimated Accounts per 100 customers</i>				
	<i>2004-05</i>	<i>2005-06</i>	<i>2006-07</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>	<i>2004-05</i>	<i>2005-06</i>	<i>2006-07</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>
AGL Sales	109,969	125,462	123,135	62,489	181,542	21.57	24.28	24.89	12.94	36.91
Origin Energy (CP and PC)	121,025	136,968	133,067	149,351	122,539	22.31	24.39	23.80	27.37	22.79
TRUenergy	115,118	92,815	101,327	126,173	95,881	24.67	20.69	23.16	28.60	21.17
Simply Energy	-	N/A	N/A	34,813	33,168	-	N/A	N/A	26.11	24.83
Victoria Electricity	-	5	104	75	6,105	-	0.03	0.19	0.08	5.15
Australian Power & Gas	-	-	6	1,054	3,331	-	-	2.38	10.17	11.25

Red Energy	-	-	-	120	1,391	-	-	-	1.04	2.80
Total	346,112	355,250	357,639	374,075	443,957	21.71	23.54	21.88	22.44	24.41

2.4 Direct Debit Defaults

2.4.1 Residential customers

Table 2.3 shows that in 2008-09, 179,293 residential electricity customers (8.1 per cent) used direct debit payment arrangements, up from 7.2 per cent in 2007-08. It is likely that discounts offered by some retailers for payment by direct debit will see this upward trend continue.

Smaller retailers such as Neighbourhood Energy, Jackgreen, Australian Power & Gas and Country Energy reported a higher rate of defaults, but on a lower customer base.

Table 2.3 Direct Debits – Residential Electricity Customers
2006-07 to 2008-09

<i>Retailer</i>	<i>Total Direct Debit Customers</i>			<i>% Direct Debit Defaults</i>		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	35,836	34,045	40,086	0.42	0.15	2.41
Australian Power & Gas	7	454	894	0	15.42	10.74
Click Energy	2	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
Country Energy	2,757	3,902	3,282	5.73	11.17	12.46
Energy Australia	-	-	127	-	-	0.00
Jackgreen	693	245	256	105.19	22.04	13.67
Momentum	38	43	27	189.47	25.58	11.11
Neighbourhood Energy	1	67	783	0.00	0.00	34.74
Origin Energy (CP&PC)	39,484	39,959	46,983	7.81	2.95	2.47
Powerdirect	772	921	760	3.63	6.95	6.32
Red Energy	4,856	6,558	8,649	6.43	8.02	7.27
Simply Energy	4,010	5,071	4,807	8.33	4.16	0.00
TRUenergy	53,786	57,719	63,263	1.87	2.04	2.53
Victoria Electricity	4,768	7,262	9,376	0.88	1.05	0.68
All Retailers	147,010	156,246	179,293	4.02	2.47	2.95

Individual retailers did not report as high a proportion of defaults for gas bills as for electricity bills, but the overall industry average is similar. Table 2.3 shows that in 2008-09:

- Overall, 148,439 customers (8.4 per cent) used direct debit arrangements, up from 7.9 per cent in 2007-08.
- 2.44 per cent per cent of these customers defaulted on their payments, which is an increase from 2.11 per cent in 2007-08, but still significantly lower than 2006-07. The low rate in 2007-08 is affected by incomplete data from AGL.
- Red Energy had a significant increase in defaults in 2008-09.

Table 2.4 Direct Debits – Residential Gas Customers
2006-07 to 2008-09

<i>Retailer</i>	<i>Total Direct Debit Customers</i>			<i>% Direct Debit Defaults</i>		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	31,169	29,257	33,683	0.51	0.12	2.45
Origin Energy (Gas)	41,062	40,077	43,955	7.13	3.13	2.50
TRUenergy	48,573	51,116	55,106	1.79	2.22	2.65
Simply Energy	3,745	4,479	4,204	10.57	6.03	0.00
Victoria Electricity	4,141	5,857	7,836	0.85	1.01	0.69
Red Energy	0	546	3076	0.00	2.38	5.14
Australian Power & Gas	3	175	579	0.00	8.57	5.87
All Retailers	128,693	131,507	148,439	3.41	2.11	2.44

2.4.2 Business customers

The extent of direct debits defaults is less common by small businesses compared with residential customers, which could mean that businesses are more likely to have a sufficient bank balances in order to make payments.

Table 2.5 shows that in 2008-09:

- Overall, 4.0 per cent of business electricity customers used direct debit payments, the same rate as in 2007-08;
- 1.54 per cent of direct debit payments were defaulted, down from 1.71 per cent in 2006-07. The low rate in 2007-08 is affected by the unavailability of data from AGL;
- Momentum and Red Energy reported the highest number of payment defaults.

Table 2.5 Direct Debits – Business Electricity Customers
2006-07 to 2008-09

<i>Retailer</i>	<i>Total Direct Debit Customers</i>			<i>% Direct Debit Defaults</i>		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	3,463	2,605	2,480	0.35	N/A	1.73
Origin Energy (CP&PC)	3,533	3,448	3,921	1.84	0.64	0.59
TRUenergy	2,574	2,779	3,061	1.17	0.83	2.19
Country Energy	195	338	335	0.51	0	0.00
Simply Energy	240	291	271	11.25	3.44	0.00
Powerdirect	1,223	1,091	810	2.21	2.11	2.59
Victoria Electricity	247	303	398	2.02	0.33	1.01
Momentum	6	169	184	200	8.28	6.52
Red Energy	43	124	185	0	2.42	4.86
Energy Australia	-	-	2	-	-	0.00
Sun Retail	25	18	0	0	0	0.00
AGL Sales (Qld)	5	1	0	0	0	0.00
All Retailers	11,554	11,167	11,653	1.71	0.86	1.54

Table 2.6 shows that in 2008-09:

- Overall, 5.2 per cent of business gas customers used direct debit payment arrangements, up from 4.6 per cent in 2007-08;
- 1 per cent of business gas direct debits defaulted, a slight increase from 2007-08.

Table 2.6 Direct Debits – Business Gas Customers
2006-07 to 2008-09

<i>Retailer</i>	<i>Total Direct Debit Customers</i>			<i>% Direct Debit Defaults</i>		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	554	471	431	0.00	0.21	1.16
Origin Energy (Gas)	768	735	793	1.82	1.22	1.51
TRUenergy	882	1,001	1,129	0.45	0.90	0.71
Simply Energy	33	40	47	3.03	2.50	0.00
Victoria Electricity	151	62	77	0.00	1.61	0.00
Red Energy	0	3	11	0.00	0.00	0.00
All Retailers	2,388	2,312	2,488	0.80	0.91	1.00

2.5 Refundable Advances

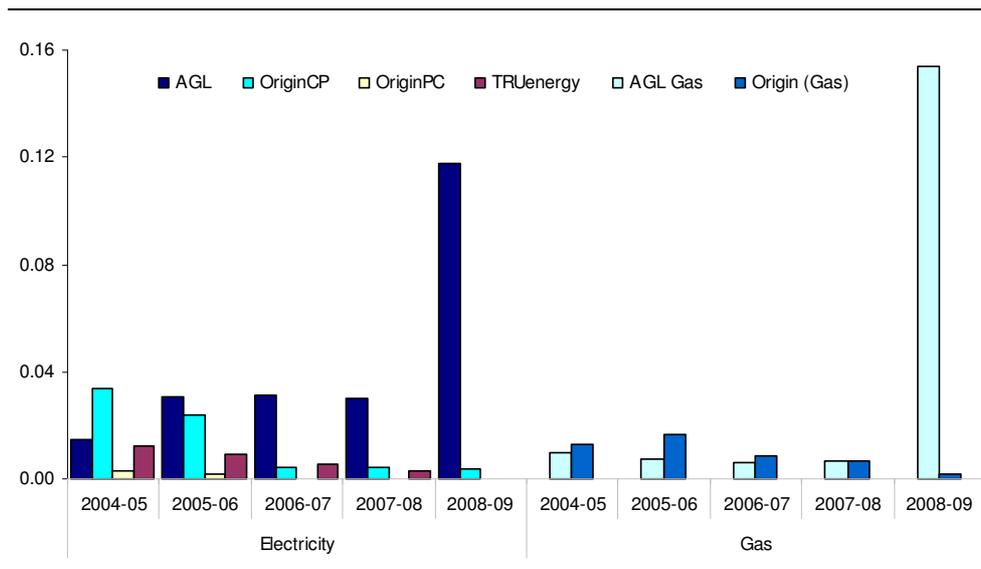
2.5.1 Residential customers – electricity and gas

Figure 2.1 shows the use of refundable advances by most retailers continues to decline. The only retailer to require refundable advances in 2008-09 of any note was AGL (2,617 electricity and 2,723 gas customers).

The Commission’s regulatory audit found that AGL was not offering refundable advances in accordance with the regulation.¹⁰ The Commission required AGL to cease the use of refundable advances from customers until it complied with the regulation. This is now occurring and the Commission expects that the number of customers subject to refundable advances by AGL will fall significantly in future reporting periods.

Full details can be found in Tables A.1 and A.2 in Appendix A.

Figure 2.1 Refundable Advances – Residential Customers
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 residential customers



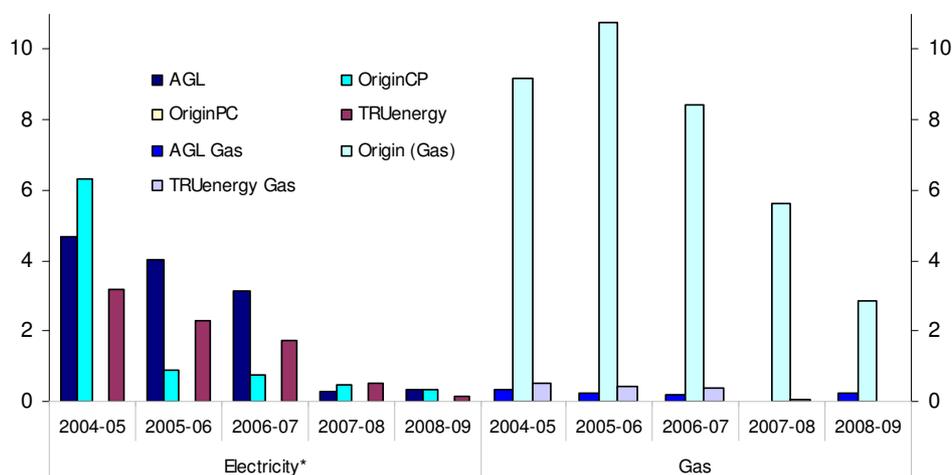
¹⁰ Under the Energy Retail Code, a retailer may only require a customer to make a refundable advance if the retailer has first offered an instalment plan and the customer has refused it. The Commission’s regulatory audit of AGL found that it did not offer door-to-door customers an instalment plan before requiring a refundable advance. The customers received the first notification of the requirement with their first bills.

2.5.2 Refundable Advances – Business

The use of refundable advances has generally been more prevalent for business customers than for residential customers. However, the trend shown in Figure 2.2 suggests their use is minimal, and they are still only used by the three local retailers.

In 2008-09, 408 electricity and 394 gas business customers were required to maintain a refundable advance, with only AGL recording an increase from 2007-08. Overall, this equates to an industry average of 0.24 per cent of gas and electricity customers, down from 0.40 per cent in 2007-08.

Figure 2.2 Refundable Advances – Business Customers
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 residential customers



* Country Energy (not depicted) reported 1 refundable advance for an electricity customer in 2005-06 only. For simplicity it has been left out of the graph.

3 | FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

3.1 Overall findings

The report shows that a significant number of consumers have needed to access government assistance or retailers' financial hardship programs, underlining the importance in ensuring reasonable and equitable access to such programs for consumers experiencing financial hardship.

Nearly 23,000 customers participated in the retailers' financial hardship programs in 2008-09, with a significant reliance on the programs by low income concession card holders (74 per cent). Relative to their income, customers entered into the program with a high level of debt (\$670), which was reduced to \$519 on exit.

Of those customers who exited the program during the year, approximately 71 per cent left because they did not comply with the program's requirements. Despite providing customers with every opportunity to remain in the program, the retailers reported that many did not make their instalment payments or maintain contact with their retailers. Of the total disconnections for 2008-09, approximately 5 per cent of customers who had participated in the program were disconnected, with nearly 38 per cent of those customers reconnected within 7 days.

Some retailers, however, report good outcomes against all indicators. For example, Country Energy's customers stayed in the program longer than the industry average, had a lower number of customers exiting without complying and with low debt levels, and did not disconnect any customers who had been on the program.

Customers' use of Government assistance increased during 2008-09. The Department of Human Services reports that expenditure on energy concessions increased for all electricity programs, although there was a fall in expenditure for the Gas Winter Energy Program. There was a 60 per cent increase in the number of Utility Relief Grants (URGS) approved by DHS in 2008-09 compared with 2007-08.

The department is concerned that energy retailers are using URGS as one of their main hardship options rather than providing customers with other options such as payment plans. This trend has become noticeable over 2008-09. These concerns may be supported by the fact that budget instalment plans offered by the retailers declined again in 2008-09, continuing the downward trend since the mid-2000s.

3.2 Why report these indicators?

There are a number of initiatives which the Victorian energy retailers must take to assist customers to remain connected to supply. Many of these initiatives are governed by legislative and regulatory requirements, and some retailers implement additional programs voluntarily to assist their customers in temporary or long-term financial difficulties.

Retailers are now required by the Electricity and Gas Acts to develop and implement financial hardship programs¹¹ and the Victorian Government provides a range of programs to improve the affordability of energy services for low income individuals and families, including the provision of energy concessions and grant schemes to assist in replacing inefficient appliances.

These initiatives, together with the requirement for retailers to offer budget instalment plans to customers with payment difficulties, are all designed to ensure that customers are not disconnected from supply simply because of an inability to pay their bills.

During 2008-09, factors such as rising unemployment,¹² together with higher energy tariffs, combined to place increasing numbers of Victorian customers in situations of financial hardship.

The indicators in this section give information on how effective the retailers are in assisting some of these customers through their financial hardship programs and budget instalment plans. It also comments on the impact of the broader economic factors on the use of the Victorian government's assistance programs.

3.3 Retailer Financial Hardship Programs

Retailers must develop financial hardship policies to provide greater support for domestic customers who are in financial hardship. Domestic customers themselves are expected to be proactive in contacting retailers for assistance and once accepted into a hardship program to work with the retailer to meet their obligations.

Retailers are not required to offer all options covered by its financial hardship program to all of its customers who are identified, or self-identify, as being in financial hardship. However, a retailer must provide its domestic customers with equitable access to the options that are appropriate to their individual circumstances.¹³

In summary, the 2008-09 financial hardship program data shows:

¹¹ See S45 of the *Electricity Industry Act 2000* and S48 of the *Gas Industry Act 2001*.

¹² Attributed to the global financial crisis

¹³ For more information, see the Commission's Guideline 21: Energy Retailers' Financial Hardship Policies, available from <http://www.esc.vic.gov.au>

- In 2008-09, 22,813 consumers participated in a retailer financial hardship program (0.60 per cent of all electricity and gas customers)
- 74 per cent of customers in hardship programs are concession card holders
- On average, customers spend 320 days in a hardship program
- 10,031 customers left the program in 2008-09 and 71 per cent of those did not comply with the retailer's requirements
- The average debt upon entry into a hardship program is \$670, while upon exit it is \$519
- 1,222 hardship program participants were disconnected during 2008-09, while 467 of these were reconnected within 7 days
- 651 energy field audits were undertaken by retailers, and 31 replacement appliances were provided at no cost to consumers.

A summary table of hardship data collected by the Commission in 2008-09 is in Table B.1 in Appendix B.

3.3.1 Retailer Financial Hardship Programs 2008-09

Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2 show customer participation levels in the hardship programs over 2008-09. Approximately 74 per cent of participants are concession card holders. Origin Energy, AGL and TRUenergy had the most participants, consistent with their customer base. Overall, the rate of participation in retailers' financial hardship programs was 0.60 per 100 electricity and gas consumers

Figure 3.1 Financial Hardship Programs – Customer Numbers
Monthly, 2008-09

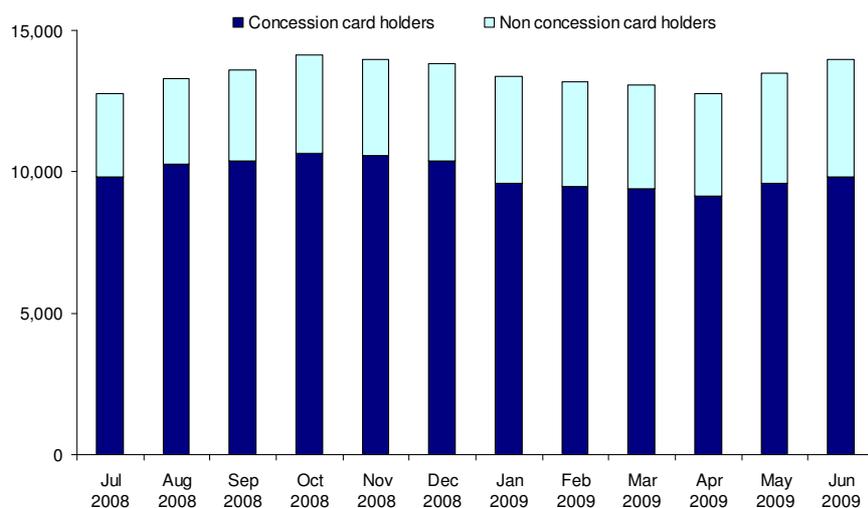
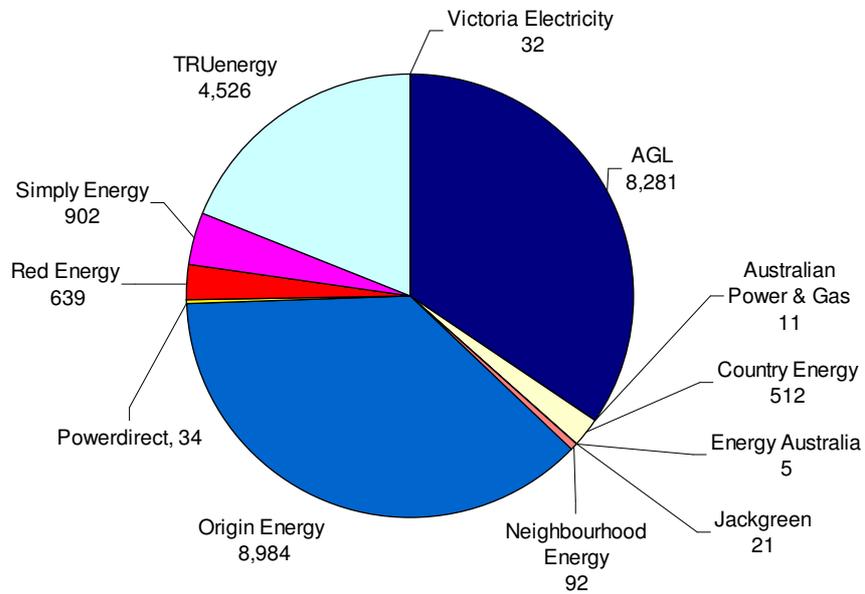
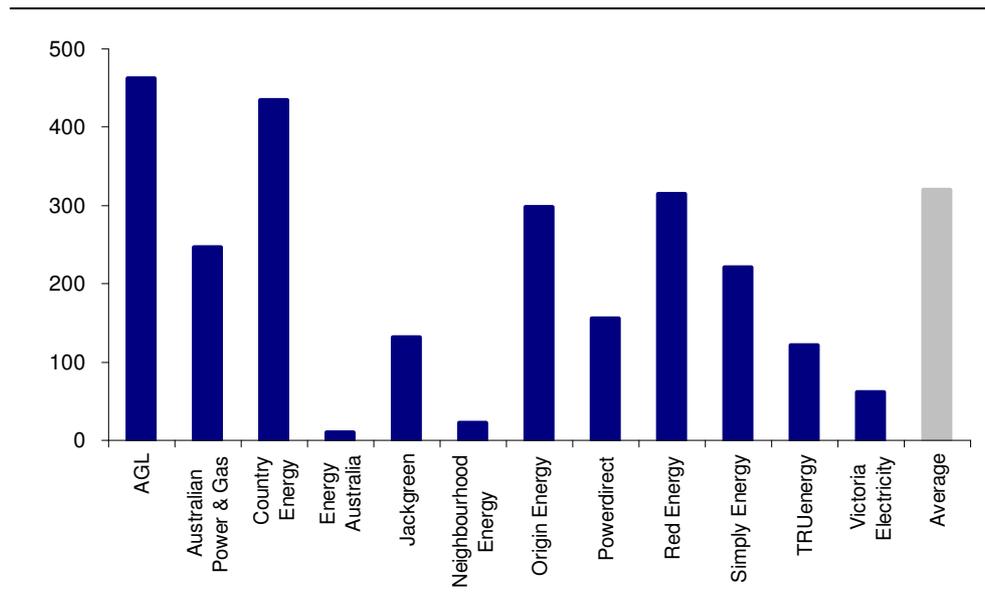


Figure 3.2 Financial Hardship Programs – Customer Numbers by Retailer
2008-09



There is a high level of variance between retailers in regards to the time spent in a financial hardship program before a customer exits. As shown in Figure 3.3, the average length of participation is 320 days, with different retailers ranging from 10 days (Energy Australia) to 463 days (AGL).

Figure 3.3 Financial Hardship Programs – Average length of participation
Number of days, 2008-09



Of those who left the program in 2008-09, 71 per cent of customers failed to comply with the program's requirements. That meant that 29 per cent of participants exited the programs by agreement with the retailer, indicating that they are no longer considered in need of immediate financial assistance.

Figure 3.4 shows the average debt of customers exiting a hardship program for each retailer, either by agreement with the retailer or for failing to comply with the requirements of the program.

This chart also shows that, where retailers have a high percentage of participants failing to comply, the average debt usually is higher.

The average level of debt for entrants into hardship programs is \$670, while this is reduced to \$519 for those exiting a program. Powerdirect, Simply Energy and Jackgreen recorded a relatively high level of debt for customers exiting financial hardship programs, with over \$1,000.

Figure 3.4 Financial Hardship Programs – Average debt of participants exiting program 2008-09

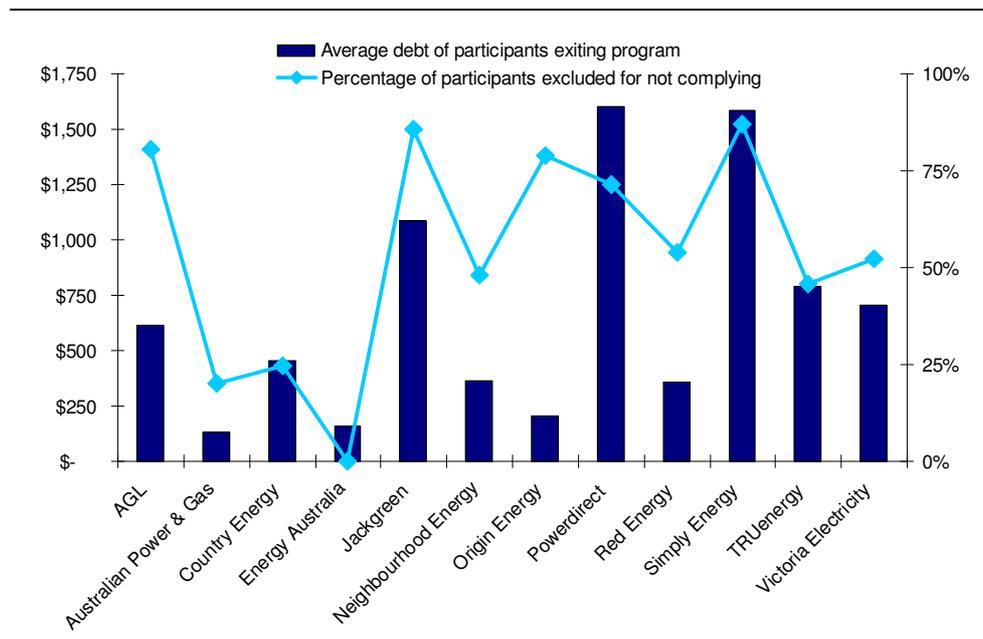


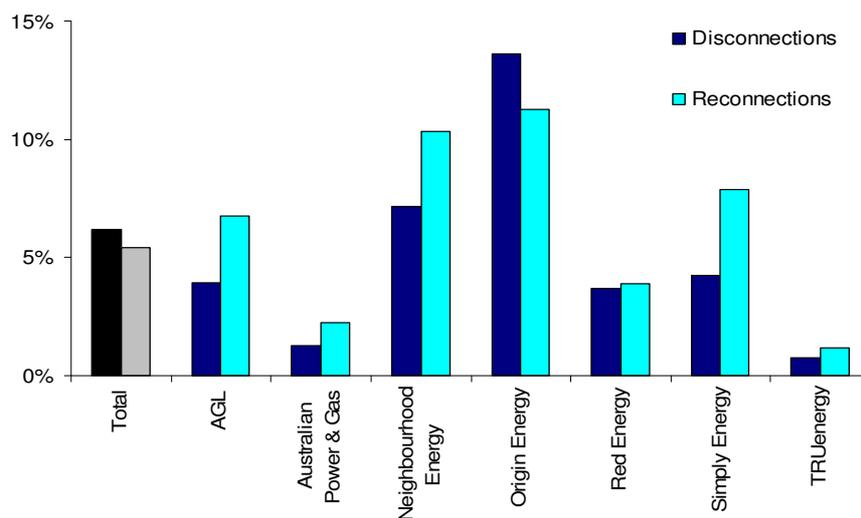
Figure 3.5 presents disconnections and reconnections of customers that had participated in a retailer’s financial hardship program within the previous 12 months, as a percentage of all disconnections and reconnections made by each retailer.

In 2008-09, 1,222 customers who had participated in a financial hardship program were disconnected, while 467 of those were reconnected.

Origin Energy had the highest rate of disconnection and reconnection of former hardship program participants, with 14 per cent of reconnections and 11 per cent of reconnections being of former hardship program participants.

Approximately 5 per cent of all disconnections in 2008-09 were those customers who had previously participated in the hardship program.

Figure 3.5 Hardship Program Participants – Percentage of all Disconnections and Reconnections 2008-09



In order to assist low income consumers to reduce energy costs, retailers' financial hardship policies must provide for customers' electricity usage to be audited, wholly or partly at the expense of the retailer. Table 3.1 shows that during 2008-09, 651 energy field audits were undertaken by retailers, with Origin Energy (246) undertaking the most audits. No energy audits were undertaken at partial cost to the consumer.

A small number of replacement appliances (31) were provided to customers in financial hardship to replace inefficient or ineffective electrical and gas appliances, mostly in circumstances where the customer has an appliance which contributes to the accumulating debt. Upfront payment assistance with the purchase of the appliance may be seen by the retailer as a cost effective way to minimise the escalation of debt.

Table 3.1 Energy Field Audits and Replacement Appliances
2008-09

	<i>Energy Field Audits</i>	<i>Replacement appliances</i>
AGL	229	14
Australian Power & Gas	24	0
Energy Australia	8	0
Origin Energy	246	14
TRUenergy	64	3
Victoria Electricity	80	0
Total	651	31

3.4 State Government Financial Assistance

The State Government operates a range of programs to improve the affordability of essential services for low income individuals and families in Victoria including energy concessions and the Utility Relief Grant Scheme (URGS).¹⁴ These programs are administered by the Department of Human Services (DHS). This section outlines the amount of financial assistance provided.

3.4.1 Concessions

Table 3.2 shows the total government expenditure on energy concessions for 2006-07 to 2008-09. Figures in this table have been adjusted to reflect CPI increases.

Table 3.2 Total Expenditure on Concessions
2006-07 to 2008-09 (\$2009)

<i>Concession</i>	<i>2006-07</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>
Off-Peak Concession (electricity)	5,148,694	5,270,599	5,959,702
Service to Property Charge Concession (electricity)	1,640,214	1,815,055	2,647,971
Winter Energy Concession (electricity)	49,955,578	53,619,681	60,619,188
Winter Energy Concession (gas)	42,358,528	46,666,374	43,072,667
Total	99,103,015	107,371,711	112,299,528

Data source: Department of Human Services

¹⁴ Most concessions are directed to individuals and families who receive income support payments from the Commonwealth Government and who have an appropriate Commonwealth card such as a Pensioner Concession Card, Health Care Card or an appropriate Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold card. To apply for a concession customers must present their card when paying an account or alternatively they may contact their retailer directly.

DHS reports for 2008-09 that expenditure on energy concessions increased for all electricity programs, while a fall in expenditure was recorded for the Gas Winter Energy Program.

- The Winter Energy Concession, which provides a 17.5 per cent discount off mains electricity and mains gas bills between May and November, accounted for the majority of expenditure – approximately \$103.7 million (\$3.4 million more than 2007-08).
- The Off-Peak Concession provides a 13 per cent reduction on the off-peak tariff component of electricity bills. The average claim in 2007-08 was \$9.22, up from \$8.66 in 2007-08.
- There were 197,851 claims for the Service to Property Concession and the average amount of each payment was \$13.38.

3.4.2 Utility Relief Grant Scheme

The Utility Relief Grant Scheme (URGS) provides financial assistance to low income customers who are unable to pay their utility account and may be at risk of disconnection. Energy retailers initiate the application process by sending an application form to the customer and supplying their billing information to DHS. However, DHS does not assess the customer's eligibility for a grant until the completed application has subsequently been received from the customer.

Tables 3.3 and 3.4 (below) show details of the URGS in 2008-09.

Table 3.3 Utility Relief Grants – Electricity
2008-09

<i>Retailer</i>	<i>Account Details Received from Retailers</i>		<i>Applications Received by DHS</i>		<i>Grants Approved</i>	<i>Average Grant Amount</i>
	No.	% Cust	No.	% Cust	%	\$
AGL Sales	2,868	0.52	1,949	0.35	92	384
Australian Power & Gas	380	0.92	263	0.64	92	399
Click Energy	8	0.82	4	0.41	75	444
Country Energy	415	0.69	287	0.48	88	380
Jackgreen	2	0.07	3	0.11	67	333
Momentum	5	0.32	5	0.32	100	407
Origin Energy	2,909	0.50	2,046	0.35	93	395
Neighbourhood Energy	75	0.39	45	0.23	87	380
Powerdirect	160	0.87	104	0.57	92	381
Red Energy	875	0.69	577	0.45	88	392
Simply Energy	738	0.47	495	0.32	91	397
TRUenergy	2,969	0.59	2,026	0.40	93	390
Victoria Electricity	1,428	0.87	1,057	0.64	88	404
All Retailers	12,832	0.58	8,861	0.40	92	392

Data source: Department of Human Services

Table 3.4 Utility Relief Grants – Gas
2008-09

<i>Retailer</i>	<i>Account Details Received from Retailers</i>		<i>Applications Received by DHS</i>		<i>Grants Approved</i>	<i>Average Grant Amount</i>
	No.	% Cust	No.	% Cust	%	\$
AGL Sales	2,134	0.44%	1,469	0.31%	91%	\$319
Australian Power & Gas	164	0.55%	108	0.36%	88%	\$292
Origin Energy	1,816	0.35%	1,225	0.23%	92%	\$324
Red Energy	256	0.52%	152	0.31%	88%	\$299
Simply Energy	523	0.40%	336	0.26%	89%	\$308
TRUenergy	2,118	0.49%	1,380	0.32%	92%	\$317
Victoria Electricity	1,140	0.97%	831	0.71%	87%	\$321
All Retailers	8,151	0.46%	5,501	0.31%	91%	\$318

Data source: Department of Human Services

DHS reports the following:

- There was approximately a 60 per cent increase in the number of electricity grants approved by DHS in 2008-09, compared with 2007-08. The total value of grants for electricity customers increased accordingly to \$3.18 million for 2008-09, almost double the \$1.64 million in 2007-08. The average grant of \$392 was also up from \$323 in 2007-08.
- Similarly, the number of gas grants approved by DHS rose from 3,092 in 2007-08 to 4,992 in 2008-09. The total value of grants for gas customers also increased to \$1.75 million for 2008-09, double level of 2007-08. The average grant of \$318 was also up from \$289 in 2007-08.
- Of 20,983 applications initiated by retailers during 2008-09, only 14,362 customers (68.4 per cent) subsequently submitted their applications to DHS for approval, up from 64.8 per cent in 2007-08.

3.5 Budget Instalment Plans

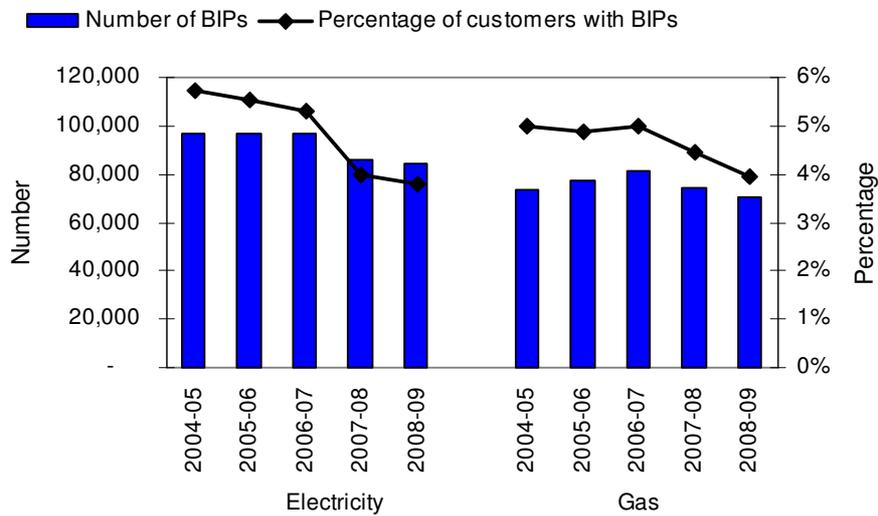
Retailers are required to offer residential customers, who are experiencing payment difficulties, a budget instalment plan to gradually reduce their outstanding energy bill debts over a specified period of time. They may offer plans to their small business customers.

3.5.1 Budget Instalment Plans – Residential

Figure 3.6 shows that there has been a gradual decline in the use of budget instalment plans over a five year period, both in the total number and the percentage of customers using budget instalment plans.

In 2008-09, 84,616 residential electricity and 70,210 residential gas customers entered into budget instalment plans with their retailer. This equates to just under 4 per cent of all customers, and was a slight decrease from 2007-08. Detailed information regarding the use of budget instalment plans is provided in Table B.2 in Appendix B.

Figure 3.6 Budget Instalment Plans – Residential Customers
2004-05 to 2008-09



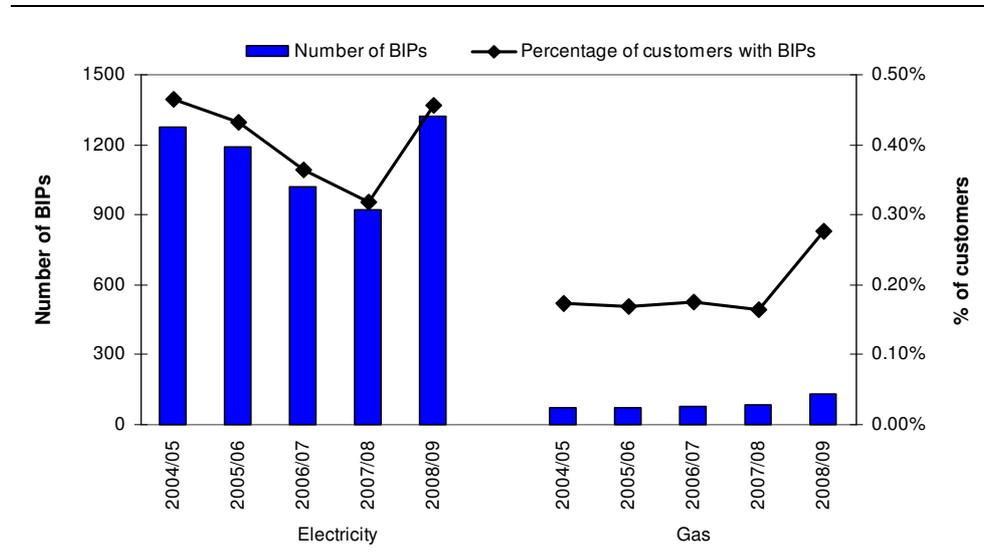
3.5.2 Budget Instalment Plans – Business

After several years of a steady fall, budget instalment plans offered by retailers to businesses rose in 2008-09 (Figure 3.7).

The number of businesses using budget instalment plans for electricity increased by 43 per cent to 1,322 in 2008-09, compared with 923 in 2007-08. Gas budget instalment plans for businesses increased by 59 per cent, from 112 to 178.

Retailers are not required under regulation to offer budget instalment plans to business customers. These figures therefore may be a reflection of the difficult business conditions experienced due to the financial crisis in this financial year, and the initiatives taken by retailers to provide assistance during these times.

Figure 3.7 Budget Instalment Plans – Business Customers
2004-05 to 2008-09



4.1 Overall findings

Despite the difficult financial climate in 2008-09, the rate of disconnection for non-payment, while recording a slight rise, has remained close to historical lows, and continues to be one of the lowest in Australia.

Electricity and gas disconnections increased from 2007-08, up to 0.43 per cent electricity and 0.57 per cent gas customers disconnected. The rate of reconnections in the same name remained around 45 per cent for both fuels, consistent with previous years.

The rise in 2008-09 was contributed to by AGL, who resumed disconnection activity after a temporary suspension in 2007-08.

Allowing for the anomalies caused by AGL's activities during 2007-08 and 2008-09, the disconnection and reconnection rate has remained relatively steady in the past three years.

Compared with 2007-08, the data on disconnections and reconnections for more vulnerable customers shows:

- There was a slight increase in customers on budget instalment plans being disconnected, mainly due to TRUenergy's performance
- Overall, there was a significant decrease in the rate of multiple disconnections, that is customers being disconnected more than once in a 24 month period. The overall proportion of concession cardholders disconnected and reconnected is less than their representation in the community.

These data indicate the introduction of retailers' hardship programs and other initiatives may be resulting in more proactive management of debt by customers and retailers, but a longer period of analysis and further investigation is required to confirm this.

4.2 Why report these indicators?

Disconnection of customers who continually fail to pay outstanding accounts should be a last resort for retailers attempting to recover debts. The rate of disconnections, particularly of vulnerable customers, is considered a key indicator on the performance of Victorian energy retailers.

Retailers must help customers with payment difficulties avoid disconnection by assessing them for their hardship programs, offering them reasonable payment plans and Government assistance, and ensuring that they are not disconnected without every opportunity to manage their bills.

A key indicator of the success of these initiatives is the extent to which customers are disconnected and reconnected in the same name at the same address. This is because reconnections at the same address more often indicate customers who may be struggling with their payments, rather than “skippers” (those who leave the address without paying their accounts).

However, these simple indicators do not give a complete picture of which customers are being disconnected and whether vulnerable customers are disproportionately being disconnected from supply. Information on the characteristics of customers disconnected and reconnected provides more insights into those disconnected who may be experiencing hardship, including:

- customers previously on a budget instalment plan;
- concession cardholder status;
- customers previously disconnected on at least one other occasion during the last 24 months.

Comparing Victoria’s disconnection data against historical trends and other jurisdictions helps to assess the performance of the energy retailers in this state.

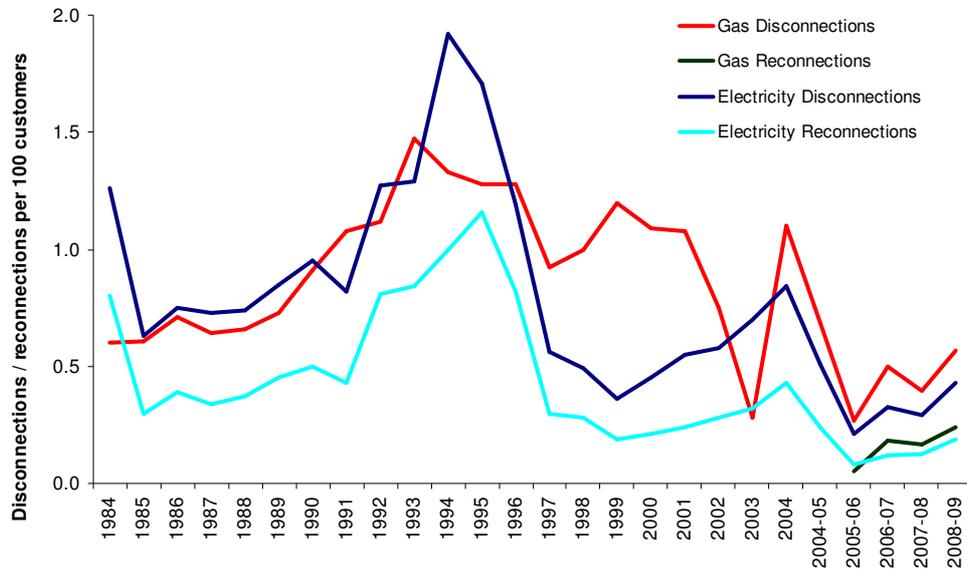
4.3 Historical and Jurisdictional Comparisons of Disconnections

This section provides disconnection and reconnection rates for all electricity and gas customers for calendar years 1984 to 2004 and the financial years 2004-05 to 2008-09, which shows the long term performance of the industry in both the public and the private sector.¹⁵

Figure 4.1 shows that the level of disconnection and reconnection has generally been decreasing over the past 10 years, although a 52 per cent rise in both electricity and gas disconnections was recorded in 2008-09. Much of this rise is due to the AGL’s non standard disconnection pattern during 2007-08 and 2008-09, as discussed below.

¹⁵ The Commission commenced reporting gas reconnections from 1 January 2006. As such, only six months of data was reported for the 2005-06 year.

Figure 4.1 Historical Disconnections and Reconnections – Electricity and Gas
1984 to 2008-09, Domestic and Business Customers



In 2008-09 there were 10,816 electricity disconnections (9,591 residential and 1,225 business), and 10,347 gas disconnections (10,077 residential and 270 business).

The rate of increase between 2007-08 and 2008-09 is inflated because of AGL’s decision to discontinue disconnections from November 2007 to June 2008.

This is not the sole reason for the rise in 2008-09, as most retailers experienced an increase in this reporting period, with TRUenergy and Simply Energy recording significant increases in the disconnection rates.

TRUenergy attributes the increase in its disconnections from 2007-08 to 2008-09 to its customers not contacting or engaging with TRUenergy as a result of not paying their bills. TRUenergy considers that the robust regulation governing disconnections means that customers have ample opportunity to engage with their retailer prior to disconnection for non-payment.

The rates remain low when compared with historical levels and as a proportion of all energy customers. Full details are shown in Table C.1 in Appendix C.

Victoria’s disconnection rate also compares favourably to other jurisdictions (see Table 4.1 below). At the time of publication, not all jurisdictions’ rates of disconnection of domestic electricity customers were available for 2007-08. Table 4.1 compares those jurisdictions where data is available.

Table 4.1 Comparison of Domestic Electricity Disconnections Between Jurisdictions

Per 100 Domestic Electricity Customers

Jurisdiction	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Victoria	0.54	0.22	0.33	0.29	0.43
NSW	1.00	0.90	0.70	0.60	n/a
ACT	0.36	0.40	0.30	0.43	0.27
South Australia	1.20	1.14	0.76	0.85	0.87
Queensland	1.57	n/a	n/a	1.13	n/a
Tasmania	0.53	0.59	0.47	0.49	0.45
Western Australia	n/a	1.16	0.97	0.77	0.55

* Data unavailable for WA prior to 2005-06. WA combined residential and business disconnections data for 2005-06 only. *Data source:* IPART, ICRC, ESCOSA, QCA, OTTER, ERA.

4.4 Disconnection for Non-payment of Accounts – Residential

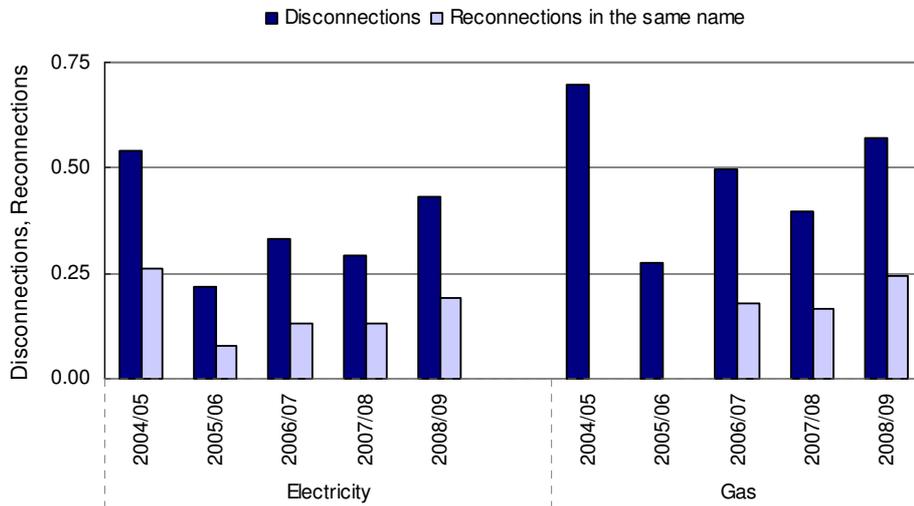
This section presents rates of disconnection and reconnection in the same name of Victorian residential electricity and gas customers for the five years to 2008-09.

Full details can be found in Tables C.2 and C.3 in Appendix C.

Figure 4.2 shows that, over the five year period, disconnection and reconnection rates fluctuate. Gas disconnections as a proportion of customers have historically been higher than electricity, and disconnections for both fuels increased in 2008-09, partly due to AGL's suspension of disconnections for part of 2007-08. In 2008-09 for the industry overall:

- Electricity and gas disconnections increased from 2007-08, up to 0.43 per cent electricity and 0.57 per cent gas customers disconnected.
- Approximately 44 per cent of electricity customers and 43 per cent of gas customers disconnected were reconnected within 7 days, approximately the same as 2007-08.
- Allowing for the anomalies caused by AGL's activities during 2007-08 and 2008-09, the disconnection and reconnection rate has remained relatively steady in the past three years.

Figure 4.2 All Retailers' Disconnections – Residential Electricity and Gas
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 residential customers



* Retailers commenced reporting gas reconnections in the same name from 1 January 2006. As such, only six months of data was reported for the 2005-06 year.

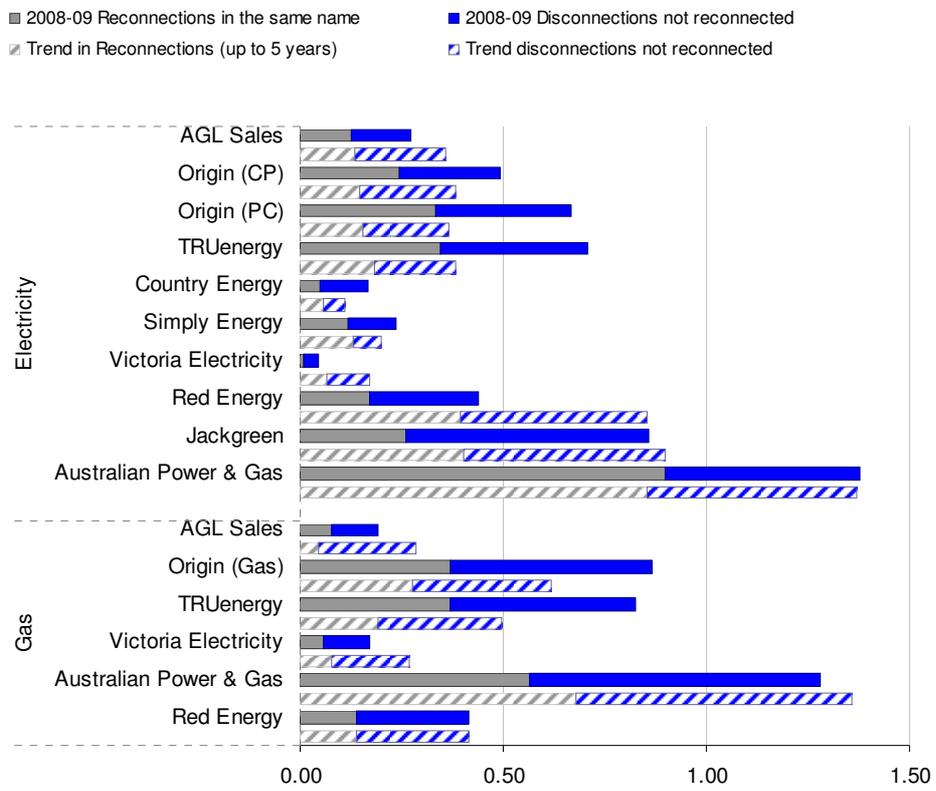
Figure 4.3 shows disconnections and reconnections in the same name for individual retailers for 2008-09. Most electricity retailers disconnected a higher proportion of customers than in the past 5 years.

The exceptions are Victoria Electricity and Red Energy, which reported significant decreases in disconnections in 2008-09. Australian Power & Gas had the highest disconnection rate of 1.38 per 100 customers.

Origin Energy and TRUenergy recorded a higher than average gas disconnection rate, which resulted in an overall increase for the industry. TRUenergy had a particularly steep rise in the disconnection rate, with 3,581 disconnections, up from 1,284 in 2007-08. TRUenergy says that in 2008-09, the higher disconnection rate is due to a higher number of customers not paying their bills and in turn not contacting TRUenergy to make suitable arrangements for payment.

The remaining retailers reported a lower rate of gas disconnections than the five year average. Australian Power & Gas again had the highest rate of disconnections, with 1.28 per 100 customers.

Figure 4.3 Comparison of Residential Disconnections for Individual Retailers
2008-09 per 100 residential customers



4.5 Disconnections and Reconnections Cross-referenced with Customer Characteristics

This section considers the broader set of disconnection indicators to provide a more detailed understanding of whether vulnerable domestic customers are being disconnected and reconnected for non-payment.

It is expected that reconnection of customers previously on budget instalment plans, concession cardholders or those customers who have been disconnected and reconnected a number of times should reduce as they are better assisted to maintain continuity of supply through hardship programs and other assistance.¹⁶

Figure 4.4 to Figure 4.6 display individual retailers' reconnections, cross-referenced with these customer characteristics, and compared with performance in 2007-08.

Full details, including further data on disconnections cross-referenced with the above characteristics, are presented in Tables C.15 to C.21 to 30 in Appendix C.

Figure 4.4 shows the proportion of electricity customers on budget instalment plans compared with all reconnections.

The number of disconnections of these customers on budget instalment plans increased from 1,800 in 2007-08 to 3,035 in 2008-09, accounting for 32 per cent of all disconnections (up from 29 per cent). The number of gas customers disconnected while on a budget instalment plan also increased to 3,491 (35 per cent) in 2008-09 (up from 28 per cent in 2007-08). Following disconnection, 47 per cent of budget instalment plan customers are reconnected within 7 days.

The rise in disconnection and reconnection of budget instalment plan customers was due to a significant rise from TRUenergy. In 2008-09, TRUenergy disconnected four times as many budget instalment plan customers than 2007-08. More than half of these customers were subsequently reconnected.

TRUenergy notes that the rise in its number of disconnections and reconnections of budget instalment plan customers from 2007-08 to 2008-09 can be attributed to an increase in customers being on budget instalment plans, along with the general increase of disconnections and reconnections.

¹⁶ *Energy Retailers Comparative Performance Report for the 2005-06 Financial Year*, Essential Services Commission, December 2006, page 22.

Figure 4.4 Reconnections previously on a Budget Instalment Plan 2007-08 to 2008-09

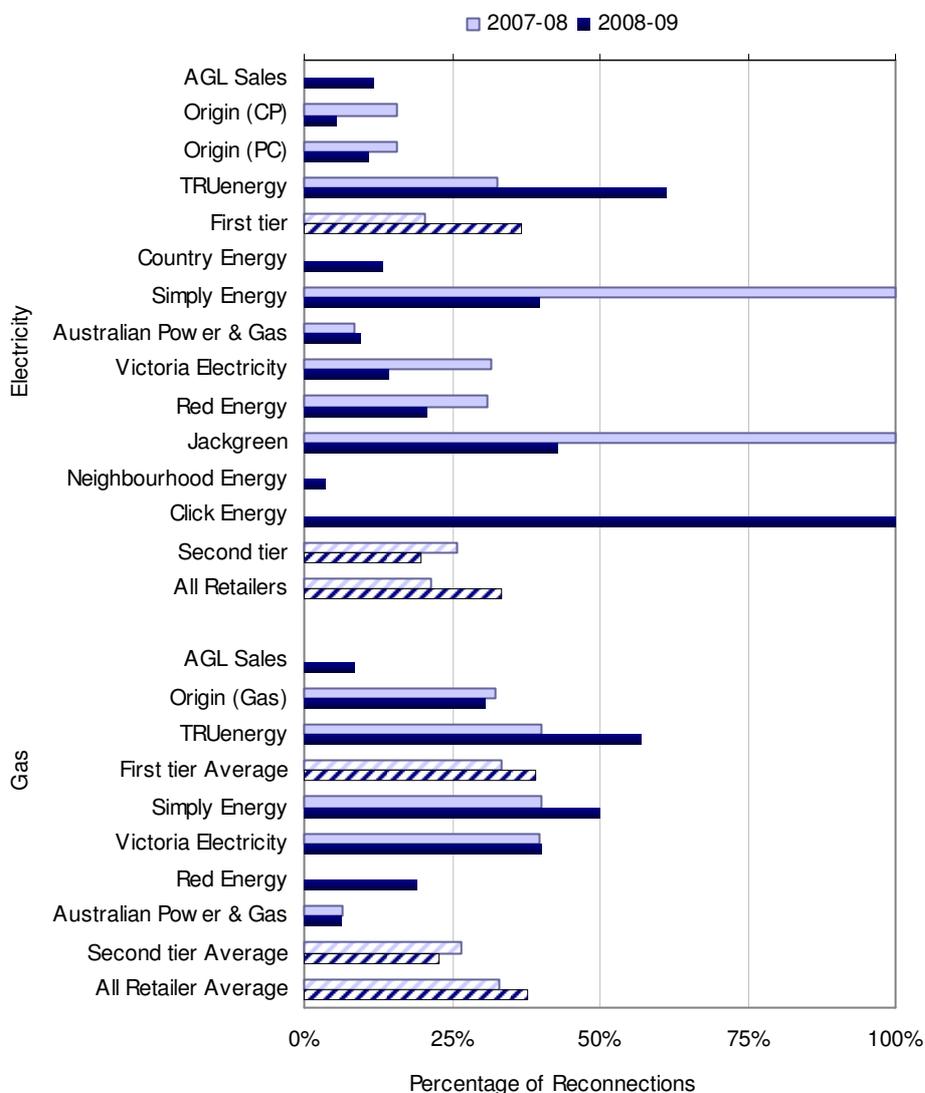


Figure 4.5 shows that, in 2008-09, 484 electricity consumers and 826 gas consumers were reconnected for a second time within 2 years. This is a reduction from 2007-08 - 11 per cent of electricity disconnections compared with 19 per cent in 2007-08 and 19 per cent of gas reconnections compared with 20 per cent in 2007-08.

These figures show that in general, the incidence of multiple disconnection and reconnection fell significantly at least for electricity customers during 2008-09. Most retailers reported less than 25 per cent of all reconnected customers had been

previously reconnected during the past two years, with the exception being Victoria Electricity (43 per cent) and Origin Energy Gas (27 per cent).

All of Click Energy's reconnected customers were previously disconnected during the previous 2 years.

Figure 4.5 Multiple Reconnections < 24 months
2007-08 to 2008-09

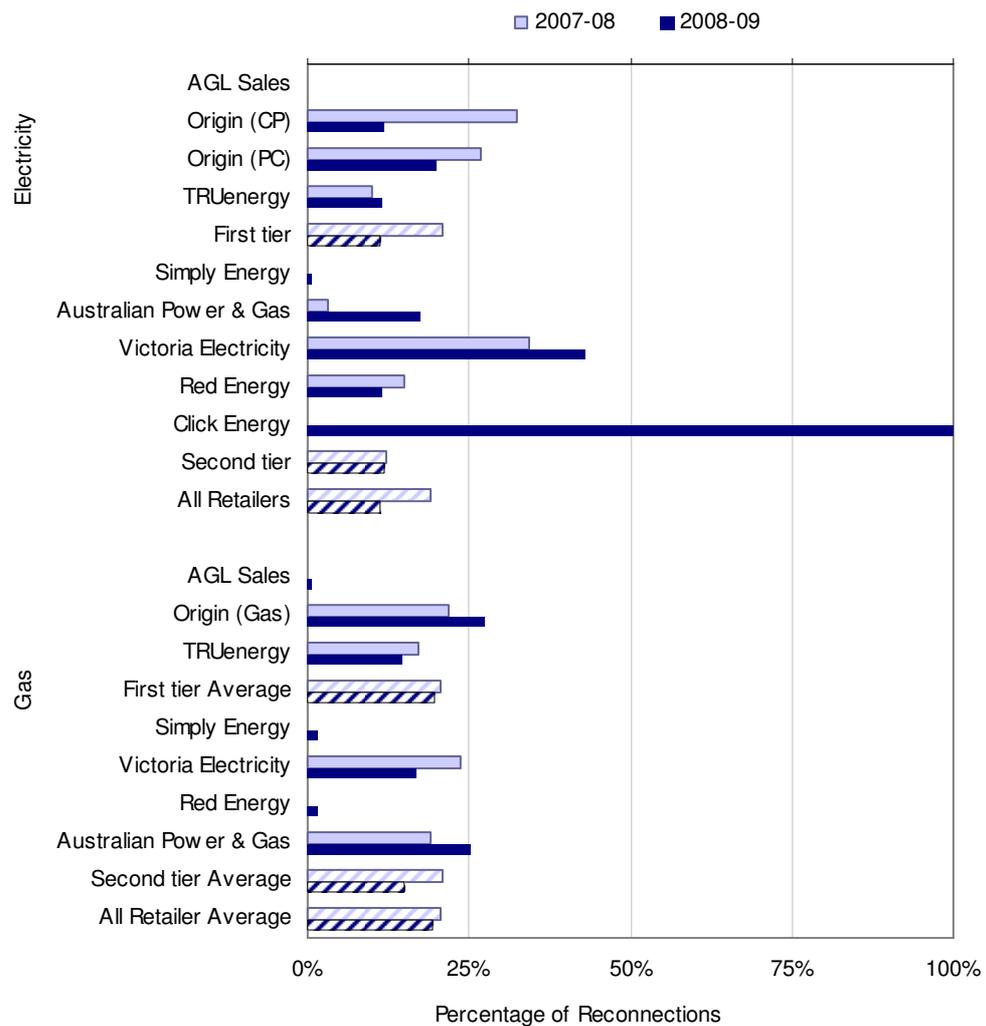
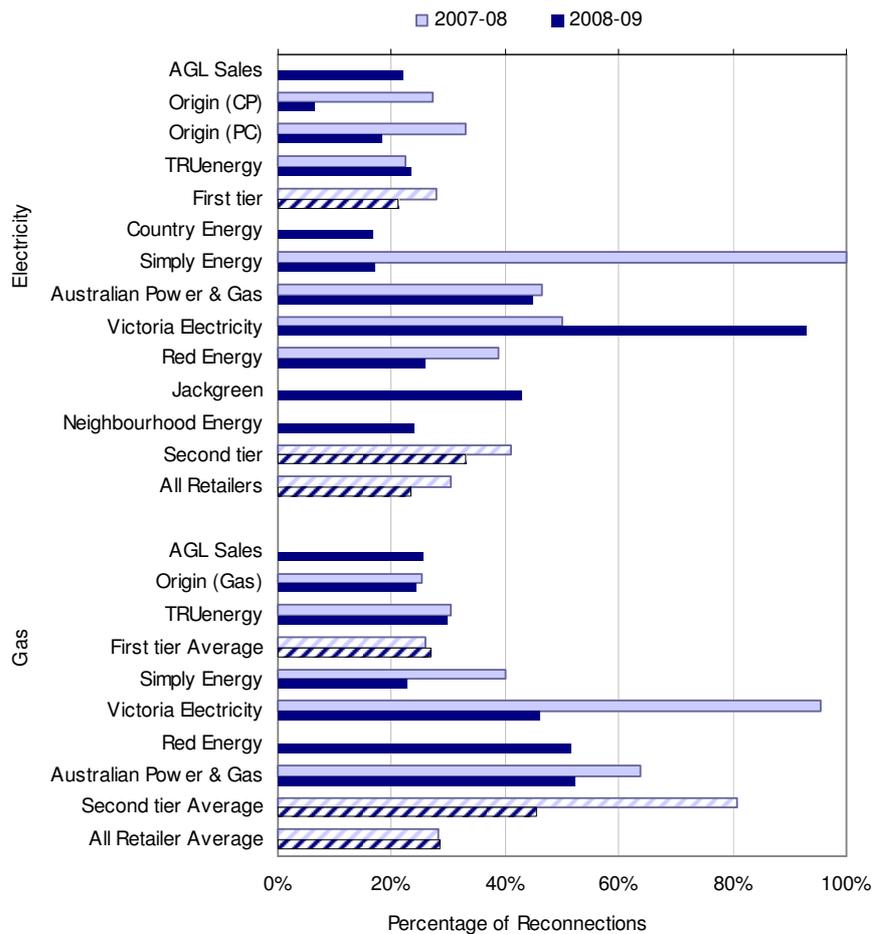


Figure 4.6 depicts the level of concession card holders amongst disconnected consumers. Absolute numbers of disconnections increased from 1,179 electricity customers in 2007-08 to 1,749 in 2008-09, but as a proportion of disconnections dropped from 19 to 18 per cent. Gas disconnections of concession card holders accounted for 24 per cent of all disconnections, the same as in 2007-08. 57 per cent of electricity and 53 per cent of gas concession holders that were disconnected were reconnected within 7 days.

Reconnections of concession card holders accounted for 24 per cent of all electricity reconnections (31 per cent in 2007-08) and 28 per cent of gas reconnections (unchanged from 2007-08).

Victoria Electricity reported the highest incidence of concession card holders amongst its electricity reconnections, with 93 per cent of customers that were reconnected being concession card holders.

Figure 4.6 Reconnections of Concession Cardholders
2007-08 to 2008-09



4.6 Disconnection for Non-payment of Accounts - Business

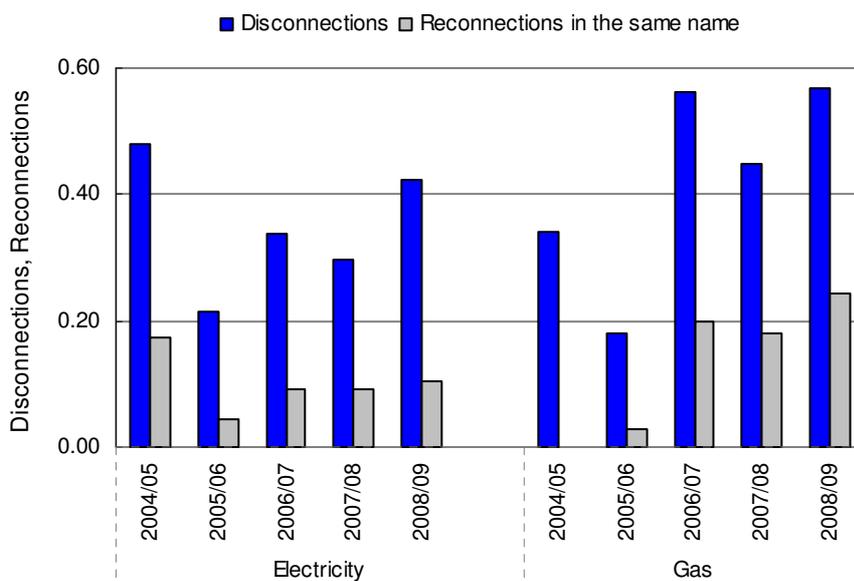
This section presents a comparison of the rates of disconnection and reconnection in the same name of Victorian business electricity and gas customers for the five year period to 2008-09. Full details can be found in Appendix C.

Figure 4.7 shows that in 2008-09:

- The number and rate of disconnections increased compared to 2007-08 for both electricity and gas.
- A comparable increase in customers reconnected within 7 days was also reported.

This increase is largely attributable to AGL's suspension of disconnections for part of 2007-08. This had the dual effect of lowering the 2007-08 figures, and subsequently inflating the 2008-09 figures due to a catch up effect once disconnections were re-introduced by AGL.

Figure 4.7 All Retailers' Disconnections – Business Electricity and Gas
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 business customers



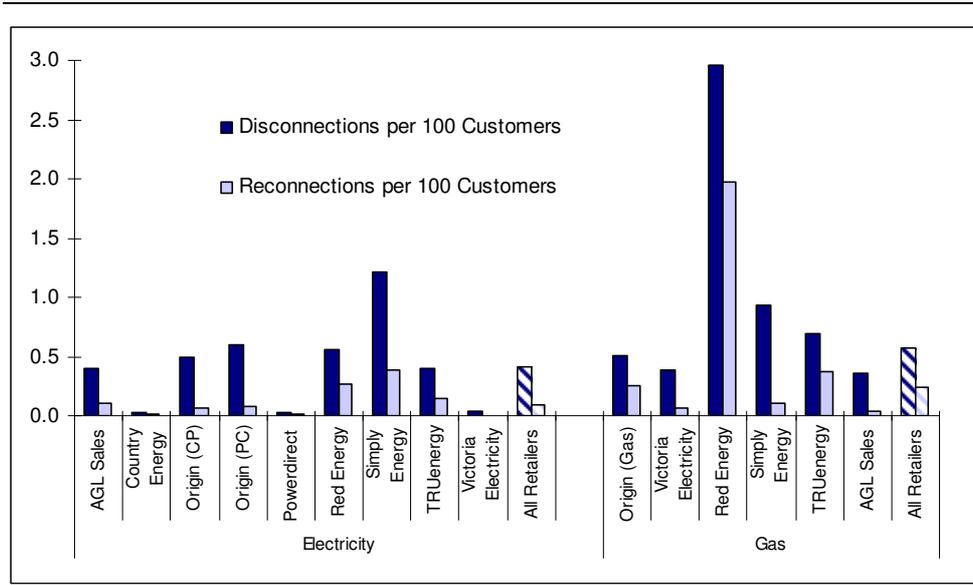
Gas reconnection data was first collected from 1 January 2006. As such, only six months of data was reported for the 2005-06 year.

Figure 4.8 shows that individual retailer activity compared to the industry average was varied, although most retailers reported disconnections at a similar rate to the industry average.

- Simply Energy reported a relatively high proportion of disconnections for both electricity (1.22 per cent) and gas (0.94 per cent).

- Red Energy reported a large percentage of gas disconnections, although this is in relation to a relatively small customer base. The majority of these customers were reconnected within 7 days.
- Victoria Electricity (0.04 per cent), Powerdirect (0.03 per cent) and Country Energy (0.02 per cent) reported a much lower rate of electricity disconnections than the industry average.

Figure 4.8 Business Disconnections and Reconnections – Retailer Comparison
2008-09 per 100 business customers



5 | CALL CENTRE PERFORMANCE AND COMPLAINTS

5.1 Overall findings

The overall call centre performance of the industry declined in 2008-09, primarily due to AGL's performance. Just over 100,000 of calls to AGL's accounts line were abandoned while awaiting an operator response, while only 62 per cent of calls were answered within 30 seconds.

Red Energy and Victoria Electricity also showed relatively poor call centre performance compared to other companies.

Overall, independent research undertaken by the Commission shows that Victorian energy retailers' call centres perform at a slightly higher level than the national average of companies.

A considerable rise in energy complaints was recorded, both direct to retailers, and in EWOV investigations, due primarily to an increase in complaints against AGL.

5.2 Why report these indicators?

The Commission monitors call centre performance for trends in the competitive market and to provide information to customers about business responsiveness and efficiency. Independent research is undertaken to monitor the retailers' call centre responsiveness to assess such general measures as call connection time, greeting quality, operator manner and enquiry resolution, and more specifically on the performance of retailer call centres in responding to customers with payment difficulties.

The Commission also monitors the number and types of complaints recorded by energy retailers and EWOV, primarily focussing on those customer cases that progress beyond enquiries to complaints and full investigations.¹⁷ The objective is to measure trends in complaints numbers over time for both the industry overall and individual retailers.

¹⁷ Complaints, either to EWOV or the Commission, on wrongful disconnection, that is, those complaints reported under the Wrongful Disconnection Compensation statutory provisions, are reported in the Commission's annual compliance report.

5.3 Retailers' Call Centre Performance

This section reports on the performance of retailer call centres, including the total number of calls to electricity and gas account lines, the number of calls forwarded to an operator, and the proportion of these calls answered by an operator within 30 seconds. Full details can be found in Table D.1 in Appendix D.

Figure 5.1 shows that in 2008-09 there was a slight increase in the number of calls made to energy retailers, however less of these calls were answered by an operator than in 2007-08.

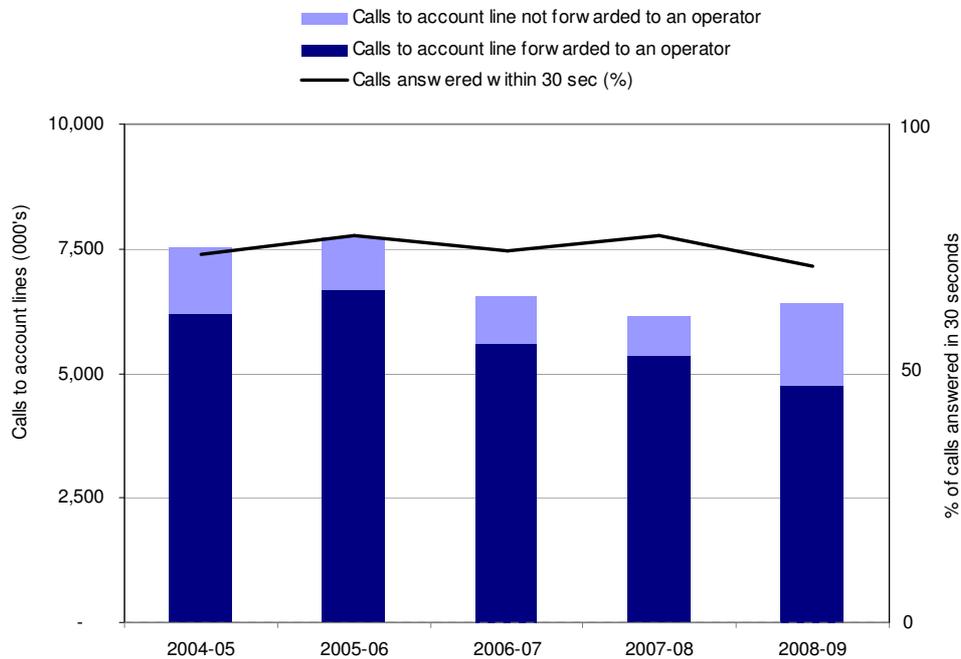
The main contributor to this discrepancy was AGL, which had over 950,000 calls made to its account line that were not answered by an operator. Just over 100,000 of these calls were abandoned while awaiting an operator response, while only 62 per cent of calls were answered within 30 seconds.¹⁸

Consequently, for the industry overall, the proportion of calls answered by an operator within 30 seconds decreased 6 per cent, to 72 per cent. Along with AGL, Red Energy (62 per cent) and Victoria Electricity (60 per cent) reported relatively poor performance against this measure, while the remainder of the industry performed at or above the average.

Graphical comparison of year on year trends for individual retailers can be found in Figures D.1 to D.26 in Appendix D.

¹⁸ As noted previously, AGL's IT and billing systems issues impacted upon its performance during 2007-08 and 2008-09.

Figure 5.1 Call Centre Performance – Electricity and Gas
2004-05 to 2008-09



In 2008, the Commission began to measure statistics such as the average wait time to speak with an operator, and the number of calls abandoned while waiting for an operator to take a call. Table 5.1 provides this information.

Table 5.1 shows that the average time consumers spent waiting for an operator in 2008-09 was 48 seconds. Smaller retailers, such as Click Energy and Momentum reduced the average significantly. Nevertheless, Origin Energy is a standout in responsiveness as a larger retailer, while Simply Energy had the longest average wait time for customers (89 seconds).

In total, 272,918 customers abandoned their call while waiting for an operator to respond to their call. While not all abandoned calls would have experienced a long wait, this may be an indication that customers are required to hold for an excessively long time, particularly during peak call times. AGL contributed 39 per cent of all abandoned calls, with 106,690, which equates to 9 per cent of all calls made to its operators. Jackgreen recorded the highest rate of abandoned calls, with 27 per cent of calls to its operators being abandoned.

Table 5.1 Call Handling Performance – Electricity and Gas
2008-09

<i>Retailer Name</i>	Average Wait Time	Calls Abandoned (total)	Calls Abandoned (% of calls to operator)
AGL Sales	63	106,690	9%
Origin Energy	20	39,122	3%
TRUenergy	39	22,799	3%
Country Energy	35	5,711	5%
Simply Energy	89	10,675	4%
Powerdirect	60	6,322	5%
Victoria Electricity	65	40,828	11%
Momentum	12	242	2%
Red Energy	80	26,499	8%
Jackgreen	27	1,005	27%
Australian Power & Gas	26	1,268	1%
Click Energy	9	211	6%
Neighbourhood Energy	32	11,546	16%
Total	48	272,918	6%

5.4 Independent Call Centre Research

Ten Victorian energy retailers participated in four quarterly independent surveys during 2008-09 to measure their call centre performance.

A total of 1,157 calls were made by CSBA to these ten retailers, of which 529 specifically related to hardship issues. The results are compared with all researched energy companies in Australia, as well as a selection of companies representing airlines, the banking, insurance and telecommunication industries.¹⁹

5.4.1 Call Centre Service – General Enquiries

The independent call centre monitoring showed that, in comparison to 2007-08:

- Average connection times were longer - 94 seconds in 2008-09, up from 77 seconds. The times across the ten companies ranged from 68 seconds (Jackgreen) to 118 seconds (AGL). The Australian energy sector average was 83 seconds (up from 73 seconds in 2007-08).
- Following an IVR (interactive voice response) delay, 64 per cent of callers to Victorian energy retailers were connected to an agent within 30 seconds, on par with the national energy result of 65 per cent.
- Call centre staff in the Victorian energy industry exhibited “best practice” manner in 74 per cent of calls, the same level as 2007-08, and equal to the national performance. “Best practice” manner is defined as the operator being interested, helpful and warm towards the caller. The best Victorian

¹⁹ The complete report, prepared by CSBA, is available on the Commission’s website, www.esc.vic.gov.au.

energy company was Energy Australia, which demonstrated best practice manner in 84 per cent of calls.

- Overall enquiry handling skills in 2007-08 was 80 per cent, compared with 81 per cent in 2007-08. The enquiry handling skills measure takes into account the courtesy, knowledge and skills of an operator in dealing with an enquiry.

5.4.2 Call Centre Service – Customers with Payment Difficulties

Researchers assessed three measures of call centre responsiveness to customers with payment difficulties:

- Enquiry handling skills;
- Agent best practice manner; and
- Total acceptable agent manner.

Overall, the enquiry handling skills index for hardship calls (81 per cent) was similar to non-hardship calls (80 per cent). Retailers' agents were more likely to be courteous and helpful with hardship calls (91 per cent) compared with non-hardship calls (87 per cent). Product knowledge, probing needs, and achieving clear outcomes rated similarly for hardship calls when compared with non-hardship calls.

A summary of results from the CSBA survey is in Appendix D, while the full report can be found on www.esc.vic.gov.au.

5.5 Customer Complaints

Figure 5.2 shows that the level of complaints increased significantly in 2008-09. Complaints made to retailers regarding electricity services increased 127 per cent from 24,576 to 55,850

Of this increase, more than 20,000 is attributable to complaints to AGL, largely due to the systems issues. AGL's electricity complaints increased from 9,213 to 29,920, 22,404 of which were related to billing issues.

Complaints regarding gas services almost doubled, from 7,329 to 14,611. AGL recorded a 254 per cent increase from 3,358 to 11,887, which more than accounted for this rise. Victoria Electricity also recorded a rise in gas complaints, from 124 in 2007-08 to 349 in 2008-09, although this magnitude of complaints is still relatively low. The remaining retailers recorded a fall in the rate of gas complaints in 2008-09.

Figure 5.3 shows the rate of complaints per 100 customers for all energy retailers. It shows that along with AGL, Victoria Electricity and Neighbourhood Energy also recorded a high number of complaints per customer. The number of electricity complaints made to Victoria Electricity increased 242 per cent from 3,103 to 10,613, while complaints to Neighbourhood Energy increased 336 per cent from 277 to 1,209.

Full details can be found in Table D.2 and D.3 in Appendix D.

Figure 5.2 Complaints – Electricity and Gas
2004-05 to 2008-09

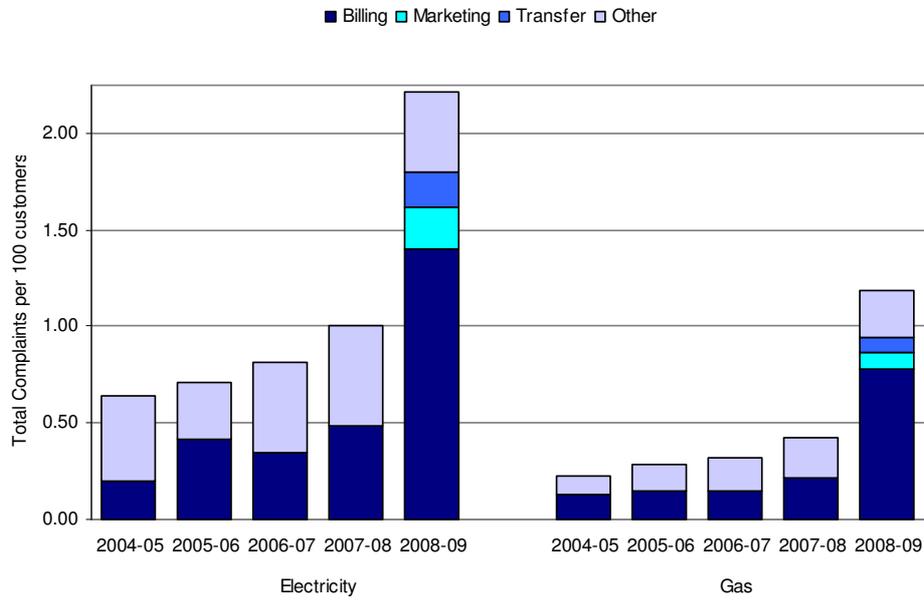
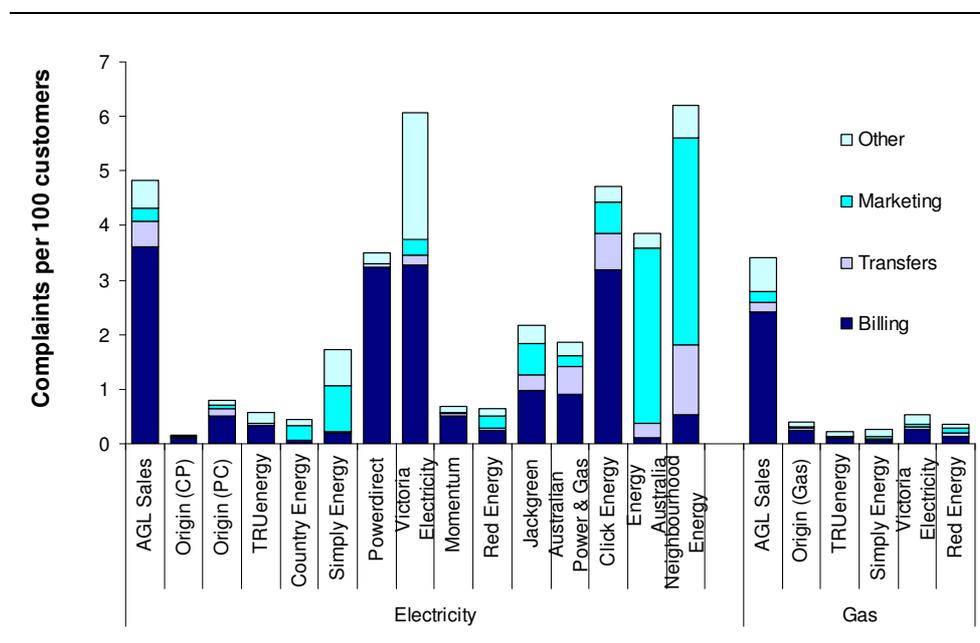


Figure 5.3 Complaints by Retailer
2008-09



5.5.1 Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) (EWOV)

The Commission also uses information supplied and published by EWOV to assess trends in complaints.

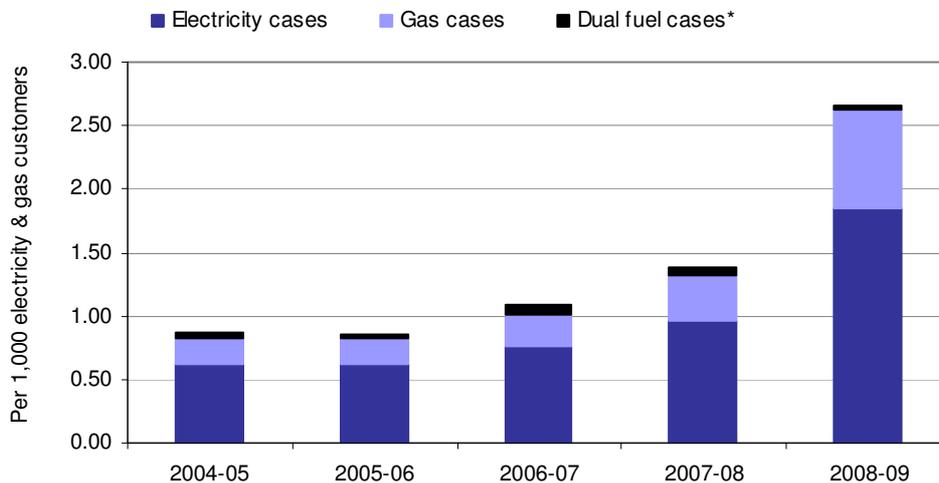
While Figure 5.2 shows that the number of complaints reported to energy retailers has increased, Table D.8 in Appendix D shows that more energy customers also lodged a complaint that required full investigation by EWOV in 2008-09 (6,861 compared to 4,862 complaints in 2007-08, a 41 per cent increase).²⁰ Energy affordability complaints increased by 47 per cent in 2008-09 to 5,327, accounting for the majority of the rise in overall complaints. Complaints on non-affordability issues increased by 25 per cent from 1,228 to 1,534.

The overall rate of complaints received by the Ombudsman for full investigation has increased to 0.16 per cent of Victorian energy consumers.

The Commission also reports on the trends in marketing and transfer complaints received by EWOV.

²⁰ As well as complaints received for full investigation, EWOV refers many complaints back to companies, to provide an opportunity (or second opportunity) for direct resolution. For more details, see EWOV's 2009 Annual Report (on www.ewov.com.au).

Figure 5.4 Trends in marketing and transfer complaints received by EWOV
2004-05 to 2008-09



Data source: EWOV

As shown in Figure 5.4, there was a considerable increase in marketing and transfer complaints in 2008-09, rising from 1.38 per 1,000 customers in 2007-08 to 2.66 per 1,000 customers in 2008-09 (109 per cent increase).

The high level of marketing activity in Victoria and the steady increase in the number of retailers over this period may account for this increase. However, as shown in other aspects of its work, the Commission continue to monitor the trend in marketing conduct complaints.

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APPENDIX A - BILLING DATA

A.1 Refundable Advances

Table A.1 Refundable Advances Data for Domestic Customers
2004-05 to 2008-09

<i>Electricity Retailer</i>	<i>Total Refundable Advances</i>					<i>Refundable Advances per 100 customers</i>				
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	118	106	88	8	2,613	0.017	0.016	0.015	0.001	0.48
Origin Energy (CP)	33	5	4	4	4	0.02	0	0	0.005	0.003
Origin Energy (PC)	9	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0.00
TRUenergy	48	27	14	1	0	0.01	0.01	0	0.0002	0.00
Electricity Total	208	139	107	13	2,617	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.001	0.12
<i>Gas Retailer</i>										
AGL Gas	37	32	32	5	2,713	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.001	0.57
Origin Energy (Gas)	87	47	36	12	10	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.002	0.002
Gas Total	124	79	68	17	2,723	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.002	0.15

Table A.2 Refundable Advances Data for Business Customers
2004-05 to 2008-09

<i>Electricity Retailer</i>	<i>Total Refundable Advances</i>					<i>Refundable Advances per 100 customers</i>				
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	3,492	2,701	2,068	162	218	4.7	4.02	3.15	0.26	0.31
Origin Energy (CP)	1,678	193	132	102	86	6.33	0.89	0.74	0.47	0.32
Origin Energy (PC)	16	5	5	4	3	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00
TRUenergy	1,971	1,438	1,078	343	101	3.17	2.29	1.72	0.51	0.15
Country Energy	0	1	0	0	0	0	0.01	0	0	0.00
Electricity Total	7,157	4,338	3,283	611	408	2.59	1.57	1.17	0.21	0.14
<i>Gas Retailer</i>										
AGL Gas	35	27	21	0	28	0.31	0.24	0.18	0.00	0.24
Origin Energy (Gas)	1279	1469	1122	726	366	9.18	10.76	8.43	5.6	2.85
TRUenergy	86	72	62	10	0	0.51	0.42	0.35	0.05	0.00
Gas Total	1400	1568	1205	736	394	3.31	3.59	2.68	1.46	0.83

Table A.3 Estimated Accounts by Customer Type - Electricity
2008-09

<i>Retailer</i>	<i>2008-09 Estimated Accounts</i>		<i>2008-09 Estimated Accounts per 100 customers</i>	
	<i>Residential</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>Residential</i>	<i>Business</i>
AGL Sales	149,262	41,532	27.14	58.79
Australian Power & Gas	5,301	0	12.89	0.00
Country Energy	6,953	4,085	11.55	30.33
Jackgreen	488	0	18.23	0.00
Origin Energy (CP&PC)	215,936	73,759	37.38	81.75
Powerdirect	3,399	2,900	18.57	19.73
Red Energy	16,109	1,597	12.67	47.22
Simply Energy	38,091	3,053	24.49	28.34
TRUenergy	118,616	40,467	23.58	59.92
Victoria Electricity	5,962	1,416	3.64	13.08
Total	560,117	168,857	25.15	58.38

Table A.4 Estimated Accounts by Customer Type - Gas
2008-09

<i>Retailer</i>	<i>2008-09 Estimated Accounts</i>		<i>2008-09 Estimated Accounts per 100 customers</i>	
	<i>Residential</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>Residential</i>	<i>Business</i>
AGL Sales	149,782	31,760	31.20	268.90
Origin Energy (Gas)	119,641	2,898	22.80	22.54
TRUenergy	84,103	11,778	19.39	61.12
Simply Energy	32,726	442	24.84	24.33
Victoria Electricity	5820	285	4.97	18.22
Australian Power & Gas	3,331	0	11.25	0.00
Red Energy	1378	13	2.79	6.40
Total	396,781	47,176	22.40	99.18

APPENDIX B – FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE DATA

B.1 Hardship policy summary data

Table B.1 Hardship program data – All retailers
2008-09

	AGL Sales	Aust Power & Gas	Country Energy	Energy Australia	Jack-green	Neighbourhood Energy	Origin Energy	Power-direct	Red Energy	Simply Energy	TRU-energy	Victoria Electricity
Hardship program participants	8,281	11	512	5	21	92	8,984	34	639	902	4,526	32
Hardship program participants for whom access was sought by a 3rd party	150	0	1	1	1	1	783	1	26	4	593	2
Hardship program participants who are concession cardholders	3,839	10	26	2	5	7	3,484	4	241	684	1,621	12
Customers denied access to a retailer's hardship program during the period	1,667	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	2	101	0	0
Average debt of new entrants into a hardship program	515	588	742	310	431	470	546	683	289	1,446	644	1,038
Average debt upon exit from a hardship program	613	131	456	158	1,086	366	203	1,604	357	1,586	792	703
Average length of participation for customers in a hardship program	463	247	435	2	131	22	298	156	315	221	122	61
Participants exiting a hardship program by agreement with the retailer	480	4	153	2	1	13	1,046	2	177	10	1,043	11

B.1 Budget instalment plan data

Table B.2 Budget Instalment Plan Data for Domestic Customers
2004-05 to 2008-09

<i>Electricity Retailer</i>	<i>Total Budget Instalment Plans</i>					<i>Budget Instalment Plans per 100 customers</i>				
	<i>2004-05</i>	<i>2005-06</i>	<i>2006-07</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>	<i>2004-05</i>	<i>2005-06</i>	<i>2006-07</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>
AGL Sales	43,645	39,506	35,931	15,050	3,451	6.41	6.07	6.03	2.71	0.63
Origin Energy (CP)	2,700	2,030	1,742	1,383	1,370	1.93	1.78	1.83	1.72	1.17
Origin Energy (PC)	27,905	27,395	27,137	26,174	29,368	5.15	5.01	5.02	5.02	6.38
TRUenergy	24,942	28,280	32,627	37,436	43,055	4.82	5.68	6.8	7.59	8.56
Country Energy	885	1,792	2,101	950	639	1.87	3.05	3.12	1.53	1.06
Simply Energy	656	576	795	498	546	1.07	0.64	0.55	0.33	0.35
Powerdirect	118	175	12	4	1	1.05	1.44	0.06	0.02	0.01
Victoria Electricity	12	50	506	1,776	2,483	0.08	0.12	0.58	1.36	1.51
Momentum	-	1	3	0	2	-	0.07	0.03	0	0.13
Red Energy	68	607	1,431	2,516	2,746	0.51	0.96	1.62	2.35	2.16
Jackgreen	-	50	613	116	249	-	10.08	30.39	3.88	9.30
Australian Power & Gas	-	-	-	251	652	-	-	-	1.1	1.59
Click Energy	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	0.41
Neighbourhood Energy	-	-	-	4	44	-	-	-	0.13	0.23
Energy Australia	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	0.11
Electricity Total	96,792	96,887	97,052	86,158	84,616	4.77	4.66	4.55	4	3.80

Table B.2 (cont) Budget Instalment Plan Data for Domestic Customers
2004-05 to 2008-09

<i>Gas Retailer</i>	<i>Total Budget Instalment Plans</i>					<i>Budget Instalment Plans per 100 customers</i>				
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	27,618	27,319	25,154	13,046	2,049	5.54	5.41	5.21	2.79	0.43
Origin Energy (Gas)	27,889	28,206	29,061	28,332	29,354	5.28	5.15	5.33	5.32	5.59
TRUenergy	18,332	21,277	26,215	30,813	35,654	4.08	4.93	6.24	7.29	8.22
Simply Energy	-	409	581	311	382	-	0.48	0.44	0.24	0.29
Victoria Electricity	-	24	262	1459	2,046	-	0.14	0.49	1.6	1.75
Australian Power & Gas	-	-	-	47	316	-	-	-	0.45	1.07
Red Energy	-	-	-	18	405	-	-	-	0.16	0.82
Energy Australia	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	0.09
Gas Total	73,839	77,235	81,273	74,026	70,210	4.99	4.87	4.97	4.44	3.96

APPENDIX C – ACCESS DATA

C.1 Historical Disconnection Rates

Table C.1 Historical Comparison of Disconnection Rates
1984 to 2008-09 per 100 customers (domestic and business)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Electricity</i>		<i>Gas</i>	
	<i>Disconnections</i>	<i>Reconnections</i>	<i>Disconnections</i>	<i>Reconnections*</i>
1984	1.26	0.80	0.60	N/A
1985	0.63	0.30	0.61	N/A
1986	0.75	0.39	0.71	N/A
1987	0.73	0.34	0.64	N/A
1988	0.74	0.37	0.66	N/A
1989	0.85	0.45	0.73	N/A
1990	0.95	0.50	0.91	N/A
1991	0.82	0.43	1.08	N/A
1992	1.27	0.81	1.12	N/A
1993	1.29	0.84	1.47	N/A
1994	1.92	1.00	1.33	N/A
1995	1.71	1.16	1.28	N/A
1996	1.19	0.82	1.28	N/A
1997	0.56	0.30	0.92	N/A
1998	0.49	0.28	1.00	N/A
1999	0.36	0.19	1.20	N/A
2000	0.45	0.21	1.09	N/A
2001	0.55	0.24	1.08	N/A
2002	0.58	0.28	0.75	N/A
2003	0.70	0.32	0.28	N/A
2004	0.84	0.43	1.10	N/A
2004-05	0.54	0.25	0.69	N/A
2005-06	0.22	0.07	0.27	0.05
2006-07	0.33	0.12	0.50	0.18
2007-08	0.29	0.13	0.40	0.17
2008-09	0.43	0.19	0.57	0.24

* The Commission commenced monitoring gas reconnections from 1 January 2006 so only six months of data was reported in 2005-06.

C.2 Access Data for Domestic Customers

Table C.2 Disconnection Data for Domestic Customers
2004-05 to 2008-09

<i>Electricity Retailer</i>	<i>Total Disconnections</i>					<i>Disconnections per 100 customers</i>				
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	5,635	1,923	1,813	497	1,501	0.83	0.30	0.30	0.09	0.27
Origin Energy (CP)	714	164	244	384	414	0.51	0.14	0.26	0.48	0.35
Origin Energy (PC)	2,942	635	1,036	2,412	2,388	0.54	0.12	0.19	0.46	0.52
TRUenergy	1,248	783	2,293	1,559	3,563	0.24	0.16	0.48	0.32	0.71
Country Energy	161	17	0	9	100	0.34	0.03	0.00	0.01	0.17
Simply Energy	221	245	173	29	365	0.36	0.27	0.12	0.02	0.23
Powerdirect	0	11	0	0	0	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00
Victoria Electricity	43	65	252	92	65	0.29	0.16	0.29	0.07	0.04
Red Energy	59	778	1,135	935	558	0.44	1.23	1.29	0.87	0.44
Jackgreen	-	-	22	22	23	-	-	1.09	0.74	0.86
Neighbourhood Energy	-	-	-	0	42	-	-	-	0.00	0.22
Click Energy	-	-	-	0	5	-	-	-	0.00	0.51
Australian Power & Gas	-	-	-	310	567	-	-	-	1.36	1.38
Electricity Total	11,023	4,621	6,968	6,249	9,591	0.54	0.22	0.33	0.29	0.43
Gas Retailer										
AGL Sales	3,576	1,699	1,969	901	924	0.72	0.34	0.41	0.19	0.19
Origin Energy (Gas)	4,904	1,273	3,309	4,069	4,536	0.93	0.23	0.61	0.76	0.86
TRUenergy	1,814	1,103	2,489	1,284	3,581	0.40	0.26	0.59	0.30	0.83
Simply Energy	-	222	133	38	268	-	0.26	0.10	0.03	0.20
Victoria Electricity	-	45	245	170	185	-	0.25	0.46	0.19	0.16
Australian Power & Gas	-	-	-	113	379	-	-	-	1.09	1.28
Red Energy	-	-	-	6	204	-	-	-	0.05	0.41
Gas Total	10,294	4,342	8,145	6,581	10,077	0.70	0.27	0.5	0.39	0.57

Table C.3 Reconnection in the Same Name Data for Domestic Customers
2004-05 to 2008-09

<i>Electricity Retailer</i>	<i>Total Reconnections in the Same Name</i>					<i>Reconnections per 100 customers</i>				
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	2,535	560	390	89	689	0.37	0.09	0.07	0.02	0.13
Origin Energy (CP)	344	18	94	213	126	0.25	0.02	0.10	0.08	0.11
Origin Energy (PC)	1,407	82	410	1,257	853	0.26	0.01	0.08	0.24	0.19
TRUenergy	639	370	1,100	735	1,745	0.12	0.07	0.23	0.15	0.35
Country Energy	102	7	0	1	30	0.21	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.05
Simply Energy	182	145	99	1	183	0.30	0.16	0.07	0.00	0.12
Powerdirect	0	11	0	0	1	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00
Victoria Electricity	21	21	90	38	13	0.14	0.05	0.10	0.03	0.01
Red Energy	35	349	586	351	216	0.26	0.55	0.66	0.33	0.17
Jackgreen	-	-	11	12	7	-	-	0.55	0.40	0.26
Neighbourhood Energy	-	-	-	0	29	-	-	-	0.00	0.15
Click Energy	-	-	-	0	5	-	-	-	0.00	0.51
Australian Power & Gas	-	-	-	185	369	-	-	-	0.81	0.90
Electricity Total	5,265	1,563	2,780	2,882	4,266	0.26	0.08	0.13	0.13	0.19
Gas Retailer*										
AGL Sales	-	163	267	49	379	-	0.03	0.06	0.01	0.08
Origin Energy (Gas)	-	341	1,564	2,100	1,942	-	0.06	0.29	0.39	0.37
TRUenergy	-	181	981	497	1,612	-	0.04	0.23	0.12	0.37
Simply Energy	-	106	67	5	70	-	0.13	0.05	0.00	0.05
Victoria Electricity	-	5	79	60	65	-	0.03	0.15	0.07	0.06
Australian Power & Gas	-	-	-	47	167	-	-	-	0.45	0.56
Red Energy	-	-	-	-	68	-	-	-	-	0.14
Gas Total	-	796	2,958	2,758	4,303	-	0.05	0.18	0.17	0.24

* Retailers only commenced reporting gas reconnections from 1 January 2006, so only six months of data was reported for 2005-06.

C.3 Individual Retailer Graphs for Domestic Customers

The five year trend in performance, where available, for individual retailers is depicted in the following graphs for those retailers with two or more active financial years in the retail energy market.

Figure C.4 AGL Sales – Domestic Disconnections
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 domestic customers

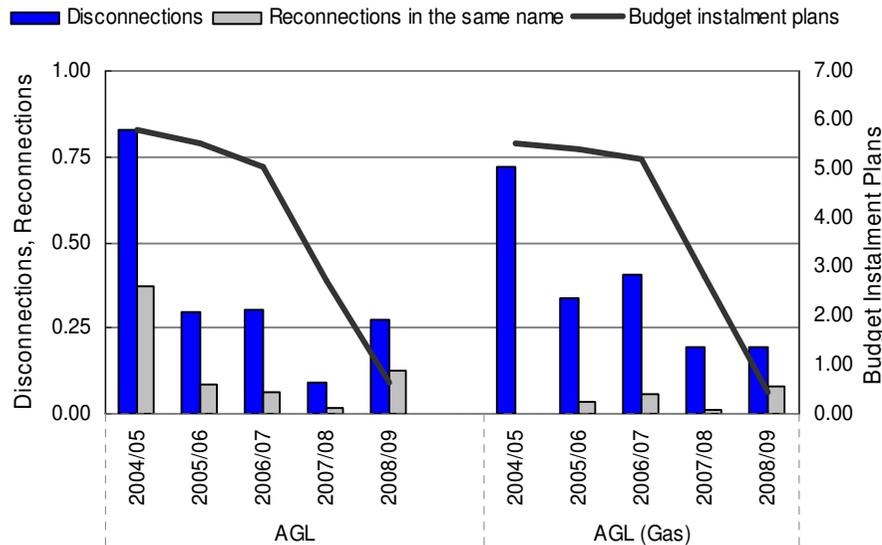


Figure C.5 Australian Power & Gas – Domestic Disconnections
2006-07 to 2008-09 per 100 domestic customers

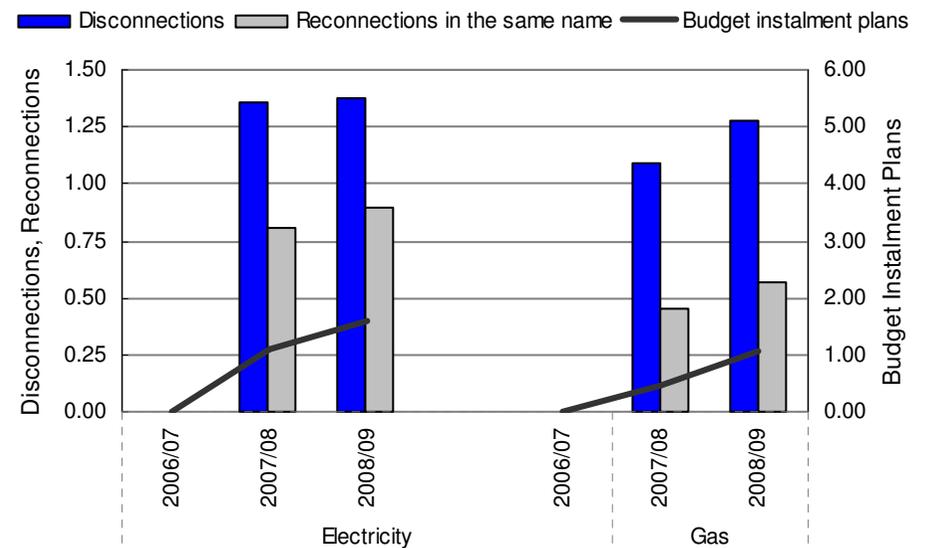


Figure C.6 Country Energy – Domestic Disconnections
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 domestic customers

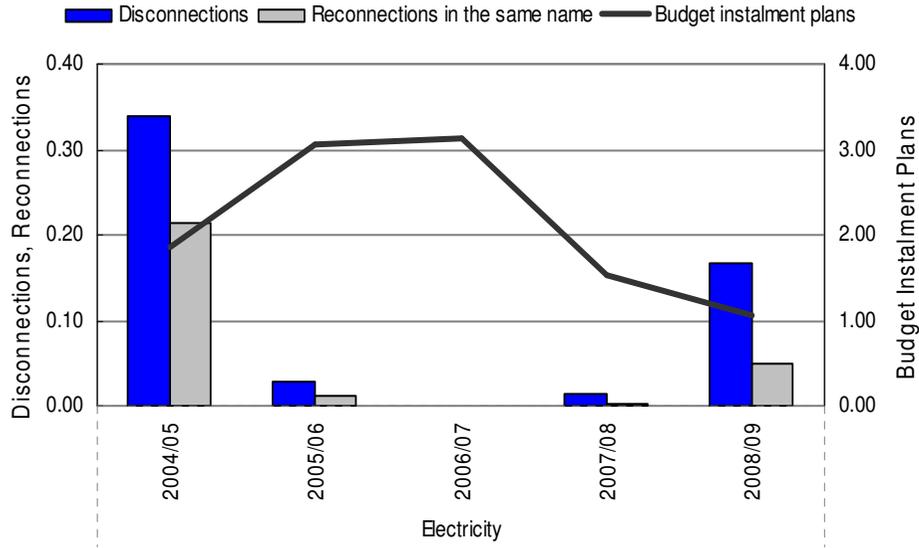


Figure C.7 Jackgreen – Domestic Disconnections
2005-06 to 2008-09 per 100 domestic customers

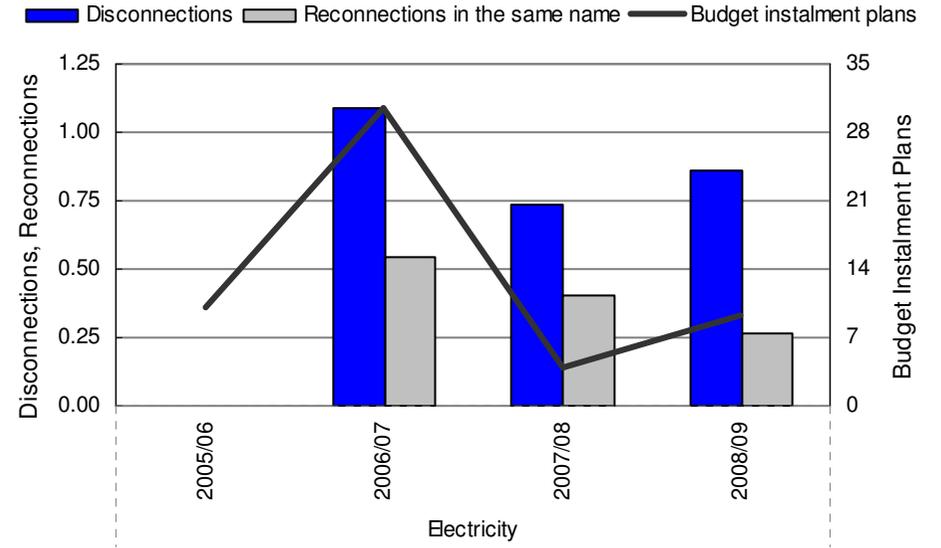


Figure C.8 Momentum – Domestic Disconnections
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 domestic customers

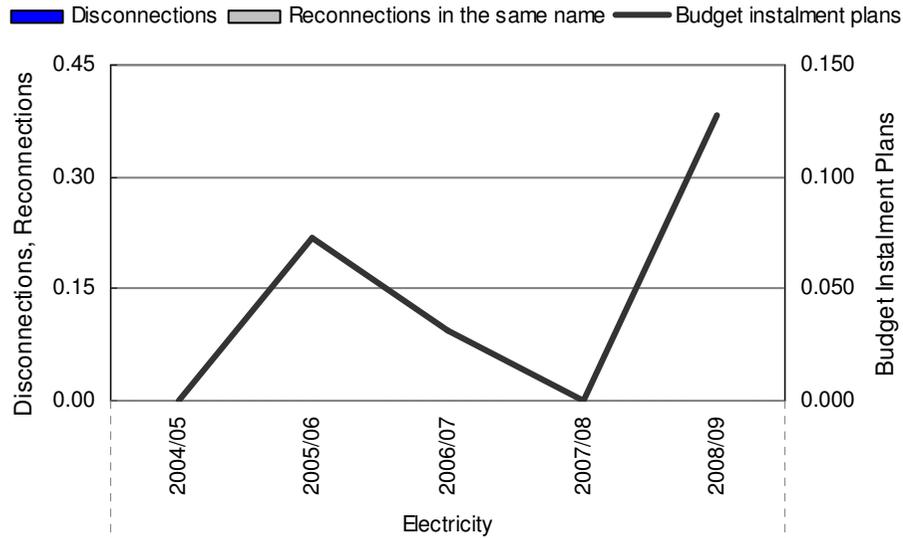


Figure C.9 Origin Energy – Domestic Disconnections
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 domestic customers

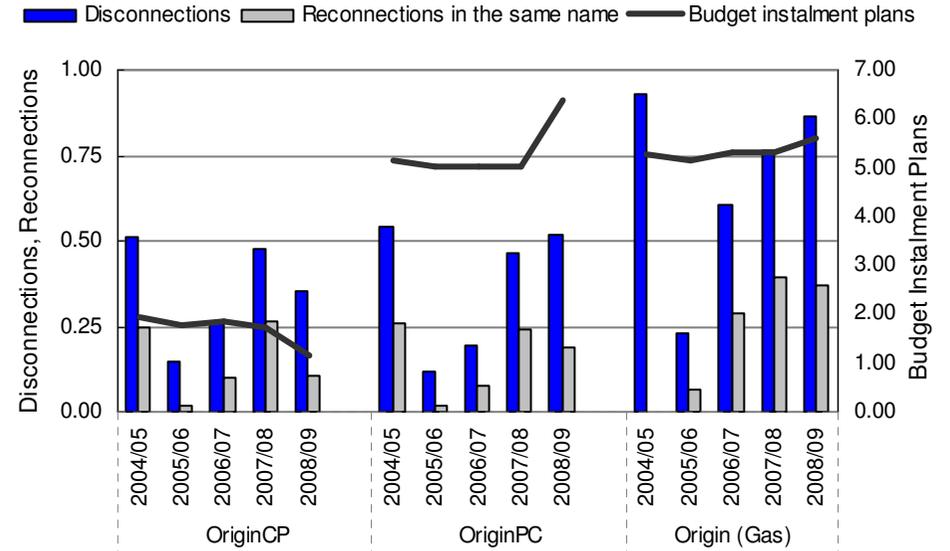


Figure C.10 Powerdirect – Domestic Disconnections
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 domestic customers

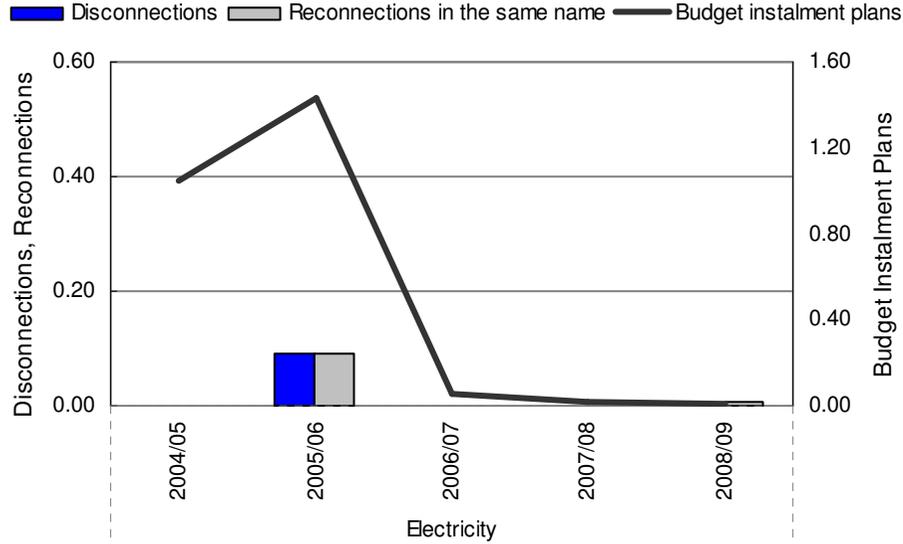


Figure C.11 Red Energy – Domestic Disconnections
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 domestic customers

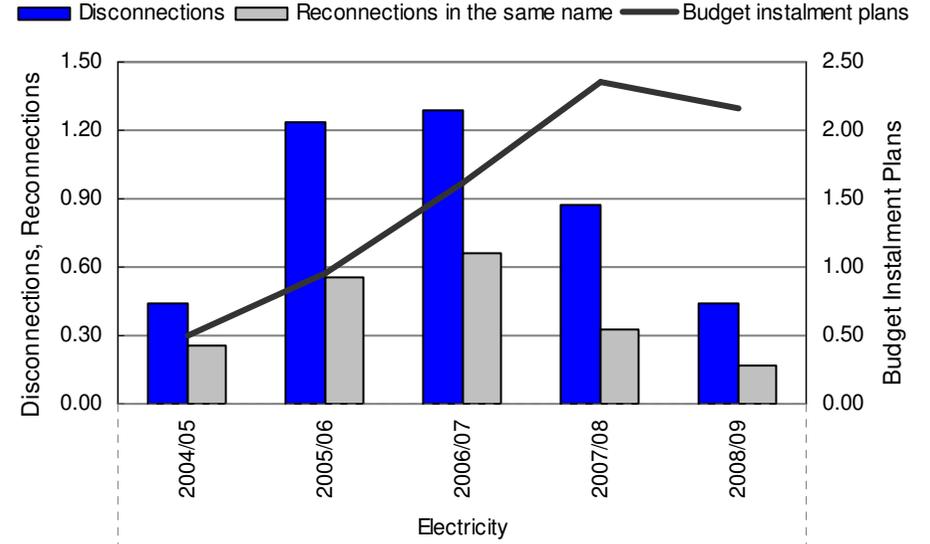


Figure C.12 Simply Energy – Domestic Disconnections
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 domestic customers

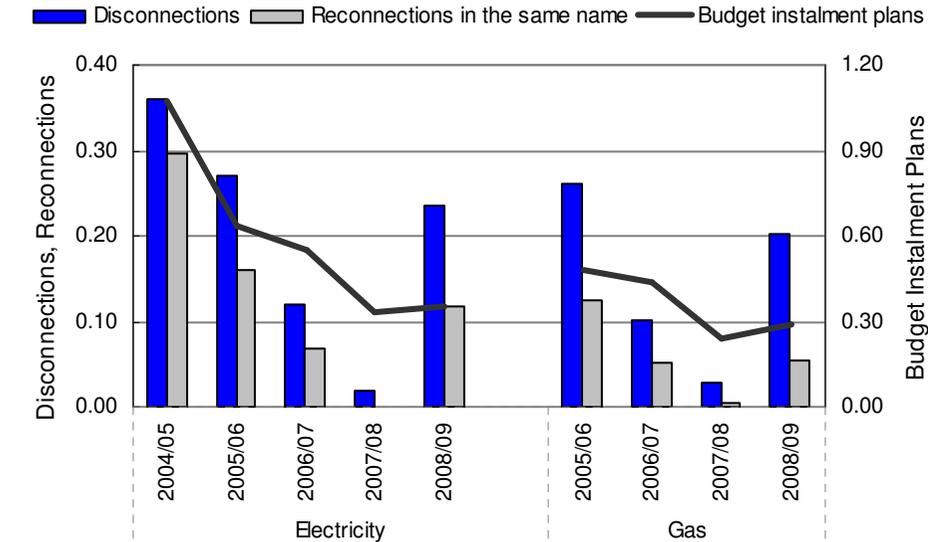
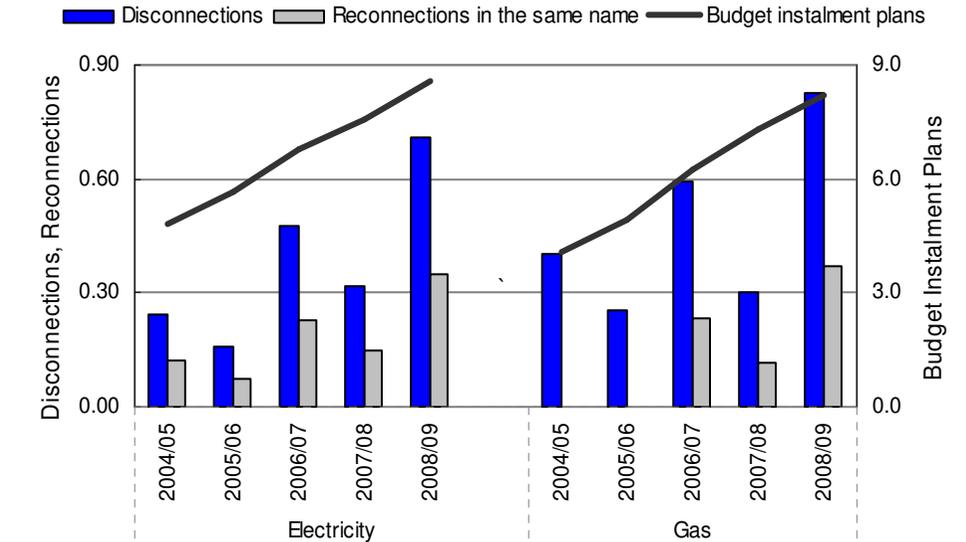
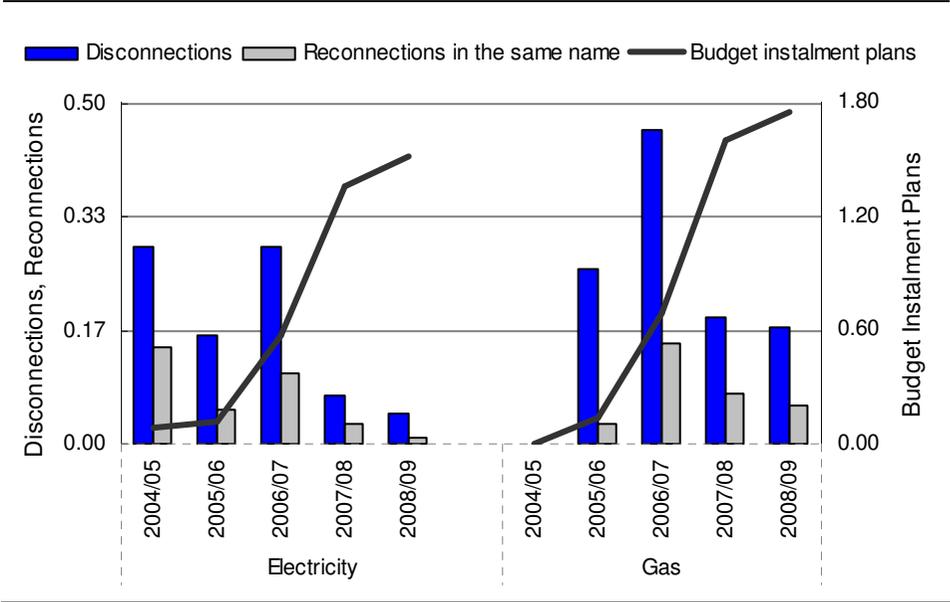


Figure C.13 TRUenergy – Domestic Disconnections
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 domestic customers



FigureC.14 Victoria Electricity – Domestic Disconnections
 2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 domestic customers



C.4 Disconnection Data Cross-referenced with Customer Characteristics

Table C.15 Disconnections and Reconnections in the same name
2006-07 to 2008-09

<i>Electricity Retailer</i>	<i>All Disconnections</i>			<i>Reconnections in the same name < 7 days as a percentage of all Disconnections</i>		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	1,813	497	1,501	22%	18%	46%
Origin Energy (CP)	244	384	414	39%	55%	30%
Origin Energy (PC)	1,036	2,412	2,388	40%	52%	36%
TRUenergy	2,293	1,559	3,563	48%	47%	49%
1st Tier Total / Average	5,386	4,852	7,866	37%	47%	43%
Country Energy	0	9	100	0%	11%	30%
Simply Energy	173	29	365	57%	3%	50%
Victoria Electricity	252	92	65	36%	41%	20%
Red Energy	1,135	935	558	52%	38%	39%
Jackgreen	22	22	23	50%	55%	30%
Neighbourhood Energy	-	0	42	-	0%	0%
Click Energy	-	0	5	-	0%	0%
Australian Power & Gas	-	310	567	-	60%	65%
2nd Tier Total / Average	1,582	1,397	1,725	50%	42%	49%
All Electricity Retailers	6,968	6,249	9,591	40%	45%	44%
Gas Retailer						
AGL Sales	1,969	901	924	14%	5%	41%
Origin Energy (Gas)	3,309	4,069	4,536	47%	52%	43%
TRUenergy	2,489	1,284	3,581	39%	39%	45%
1st Tier Total / Average	7,767	6,254	9,041	36%	42%	44%
Simply Energy	133	38	268	50%	13%	26%
Victoria Electricity	245	170	185	32%	35%	35%
Australian Power & Gas	-	113	379	-	42%	44%
Red Energy	-	6	204	-	0%	33%
2nd Tier Total / Average	378	208	1,036	39%	34%	35%
All Gas Retailers	8,145	6,462	10,077	36%	44%	43%

Table C.16 Disconnections and Budget Instalment Plans
2006-07 to 2008-09

<i>Electricity Retailer</i>	<i>All Disconnections</i>			<i>Disconnections previously on a BIP as a percentage of all Disconnections</i>		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	1,813	497	1,501	10%	0%	7%
Origin Energy (CP)	244	384	414	31%	29%	23%
Origin Energy (PC)	1,036	2,412	2,388	40%	41%	33%
TRUenergy	2,293	1,559	3,563	35%	29%	50%
1st Tier Total / Average	5,386	4,856	7,866	27%	32%	35%
Country Energy	0	9	100	0%	11%	9%
Simply Energy	173	29	365	91%	31%	22%
Victoria Electricity	252	92	65	9%	15%	9%
Red Energy	1,135	935	558	19%	21%	19%
Jackgreen	22	22	23	23%	59%	13%
Neighbourhood Energy	-	0	42	-	0%	0%
Click Energy	-	0	5	-	0%	0%
Australian Power & Gas	-	310	567	-	0%	8%
2nd Tier Total / Average	1,582	1,397	1,725	25%	17%	15%
All Retailers	6,968	6,249	9,591	27%	29%	32%
Gas Retailer						
AGL Sales	1,969	901	924	14%	N/A	5%
Origin Energy (Gas)	3,309	4,069	4,536	38%	34%	35%
TRUenergy	2,489	1,284	3,581	35%	33%	48%
1st Tier Total / Average	7,767	6,254	9,041	31%	29%	35%
Simply Energy	133	38	268	94%	29%	31%
Australian Power & Gas	-	-	379	-	-	6%
Red Energy	-	-	204	-	-	9%
Victoria Electricity	245	170	185	3%	21%	18%
2nd Tier Total / Average	378	208	1,036	35%	22%	15%
All Gas Retailers	8,145	6,462	10,077	31%	29%	35%

Table C.17 Reconnections and Budget Instalment Plans
2006-07 to 2008-09

<i>Electricity Retailer</i>	<i>All Reconnections</i>			<i>Reconnections previously on a BIP as a percentage of all Reconnections</i>		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	390	89	689	3%	0%	12%
Origin Energy (CP)	94	213	126	19%	15%	6%
Origin Energy (PC)	410	1257	853	15%	16%	11%
TRUenergy	1,100	735	1,745	47%	33%	61%
1st Tier Total / Average	1,994	2,294	3,413	30%	20%	37%
Country Energy	0	1	30	0%	0%	13%
Simply Energy	99	1	183	92%	100%	40%
Victoria Electricity	90	38	13	18%	32%	14%
Red Energy	586	351	216	26%	31%	21%
Jackgreen	11	12	7	0%	100%	43%
Neighbourhood Energy	-	0	29	-	0%	0%
Click Energy	-	0	5	-	0%	0%
Australian Power & Gas	-	185	369	-	9%	9%
2nd Tier Total / Average	786	588	818	33%	26%	21%
All Retailers	2,780	2,882	4,231	31%	22%	33%
Gas Retailer						
AGL Sales	267	49	379	6%	N/A	8%
Origin Energy (Gas)	1,564	2,100	1,942	36%	32%	31%
TRUenergy	981	497	1,612	48%	40%	57%
1st Tier Total / Average	2,812	2,646	3,933	37%	31%	39%
Simply Energy	67	5	70	94%	40%	50%
Victoria Electricity	79	60	65	8%	45%	40%
Australian Power & Gas	-	47	167	-	6%	6%
Red Energy	-	-	68	-	-	19%
2nd Tier Total / Average	146	112	370	47%	22%	23%
All Gas Retailers	2,958	2,758	4,303	38%	31%	38%

Table C.18 Disconnections x Multiple Disconnections < 24 months
2006-07 to 2008-09

<i>Electricity Retailer</i>	<i>All Disconnections</i>			<i>Multiple Disconnections < 24 months as a percentage of all Disconnections</i>		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	1813	497	1,501	12%	0%	0%
Origin Energy (CP)	244	384	414	12%	4%	9%
Origin Energy (PC)	1036	2412	2,388	7%	5%	7%
TRUenergy	2,293	1,559	3,563	18%	9%	10%
1st Tier Total / Average	5,386	4,852	7,866	14%	6%	7%
Country Energy	0	9	100	0%	0%	0%
Simply Energy	173	29	365	8%	0%	1%
Victoria Electricity	252	92	65	5%	23%	12%
Red Energy	1135	935	558	7%	13%	11%
Jackgreen	22	22	23	0%	0%	0%
Neighbourhood Energy	-	0	42	-	0%	0%
Click Energy	-	0	5	-	0%	0%
Australian Power & Gas	-	310	567	-	3%	18%
2nd Tier Total / Average	1,582	1,397	1,725	7%	7%	10%
All Electricity Retailers	6,968	6,249	9,591	12%	7%	8%
Gas Retailer						
AGL Sales	1969	901	924	8%	N/A	1%
Origin Energy (Gas)	3309	4069	4,536	21%	23%	26%
TRUenergy	2489	1284	3,581	11%	15%	14%
1st Tier Total / Average	7767	6254	9,041	15%	18%	19%
Simply Energy	133	38	268	7%	0%	1%
Victoria Electricity	245	170	185	11%	36%	15%
Australian Power & Gas	-	113	379	-	27%	28%
Red Energy	-	6	204	-	0%	6%
2nd Tier Total / Average	378	327	1,036	10%	28%	14%
All Gas Retailers	8145	6581	10,077	14%	19%	18%

Table C.19 Reconnections and Multiple Reconnections < 24 months
2006-07 to 2008-09

<i>Retailer</i>	<i>All Reconnections</i>			<i>Multiple Reconnections < 24 months as a percentage of all Reconnections</i>		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	390	89	689	15%	0%	0%
Origin Energy (CP)	94	213	126	31%	32%	12%
Origin Energy (PC)	410	1,257	853	19%	27%	20%
TRUenergy	1,100	735	1,745	28%	10%	11%
1st Tier Total / Average	1,994	2,294	3,413	23%	21%	11%
Country Energy	0	1	30	0%	0%	0%
Simply Energy	99	1	183	6%	0%	1%
Victoria Electricity	90	38	13	4%	34%	46%
Red Energy	586	351	216	8%	15%	12%
Jackgreen	11	12	7	0%	0%	0%
Neighbourhood Energy	-	0	29	-	0%	0%
Click Energy	-	0	5	-	0%	0%
Australian Power & Gas	-	185	369	-	0%	17%
2nd Tier Total / Average	786	588	818	7%	12%	12%
All Electricity Retailers	2,780	2,882	4,231	19%	19%	11%
Gas Retailer						
AGL Sales	267	49	379	15%	N/A	1%
Origin Energy (Gas)	1,564	2,100	1,942	23%	22%	27%
TRUenergy	981	497	1,612	17%	17%	15%
1st Tier Total / Average	2,812	2,646	3,933	20%	20%	20%
Simply Energy	67	5	70	6%	0%	1%
Victoria Electricity	79	60	65	9%	27%	17%
Australian Power & Gas	-	47	167	-	19%	25%
Red Energy			68	-	-	1%
2nd Tier Total / Average	146	112	370	8%	22%	15%
All Gas Retailers	2,958	2,758	4,303	20%	21%	19%

Table C.20 Disconnections and Concession Cardholder Disconnections
2006-07 to 2008-09

<i>Electricity Retailer</i>	<i>All Disconnections</i>			<i>Concession Cardholder Disconnections as a percentage of all Disconnections</i>		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	1,813	497	1,501	22%	0%	15%
Origin Energy (CP)	244	384	414	11%	12%	10%
Origin Energy (PC)	1,036	2,412	2,388	15%	15%	13%
TRUenergy	2,293	1,559	3563	27%	19%	19%
1st Tier Total / Average	5,386	4,852	7,866	22%	15%	16%
Country Energy	0	9	100	0%	22%	10%
Simply Energy	173	29	365	24%	10%	10%
Victoria Electricity	252	92	65	19%	36%	54%
Red Energy	1,135	935	558	34%	33%	28%
Jackgreen	22	22	23	0%	0%	22%
Neighbourhood Energy	-	0	42	-	0%	0%
Click Energy	-	0	5	-	0%	0%
Australian Power & Gas	-	310	567	-	39%	44%
2nd Tier Total / Average	1,582	1,397	1,725	30%	33%	29%
All Electricity Retailers	6,968	6,249	9,591	24%	19%	18%
Gas Retailer						
AGL Sales	1,969	901	924	17%	0%	4%
Origin Energy (Gas)	3,309	4,069	4,536	28%	27%	27%
TRUenergy	2,489	1,284	3,581	26%	24%	25%
1st Tier Total / Average	7,767	6,254	9,041	24%	23%	24%
Simply Energy	133	38	268	24%	11%	12%
Victoria Electricity	245	170	185	9%	38%	58%
Australian Power & Gas	-	113	379	-	65%	0%
Red Energy	-	6	204	-	33%	44%
2nd Tier Total / Average	378	327	1,036	14%	44%	22%
All Gas Retailers	8,145	6,581	10,077	24%	24%	24%

Table C.21 Reconnections and Concession Cardholder Reconnections
2006-07 to 2008-09

<i>Electricity Retailer</i>	<i>All Reconnections</i>			<i>Concession Cardholder Reconnections as a percentage of all Reconnections</i>		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	390	89	689	6%	0%	22%
Origin Energy (CP)	94	213	126	26%	27%	6%
Origin Energy (PC)	410	1257	853	32%	33%	18%
TRUenergy	1,100	735	1745	28%	22%	23%
1st Tier Total / Average	1,994	2,294	3,413	24%	28%	21%
Country Energy	0	1	30	0%	0%	17%
Simply Energy	99	1	183	23%	100%	17%
Victoria Electricity	90	38	13	29%	50%	93%
Red Energy	586	351	216	37%	39%	26%
Jackgreen	11	12	7	0%	0%	43%
Neighbourhood Energy	-	0	29	-	0%	0%
Click Energy	-	0	5	-	0%	0%
Australian Power & Gas	-	185	369	-	46%	45%
2nd Tier Total / Average	786	588	818	34%	41%	33%
All Electricity Retailers	2,780	2,882	4,231	27%	31%	24%
Gas Retailer						
AGL Sales	267	49	379	10%	0%	4%
Origin Energy (Gas)	1,564	2,100	1,942	32%	25%	27%
TRUenergy	981	497	1612	32%	31%	25%
1st Tier Total / Average	2,812	2,646	3,933	30%	26%	21%
Simply Energy	67	5	70	27%	40%	12%
Red Energy	-	-	68	-	-	44%
Victoria Electricity	79	60	65	23%	96%	46%
Australian Power & Gas	-	47	167	-	64%	0%
2nd Tier Total / Average	146	112	370	25%	86%	45%
All Gas Retailers	2,958	2,758	4,303	30%	28%	28%

C.5 Access Data for Business Customers

Table C.22 Disconnection Data for Business Customers

2004-05 to 2008-09

<i>Electricity Retailer</i>	<i>Total Disconnections</i>					<i>Disconnections per 100 Customers</i>				
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	719	308	310	65	284	2.11	0.94	0.94	0.10	0.40
Origin Energy (CP)	190	61	109	142	136	0.72	0.28	0.61	0.66	0.50
Origin Energy (PC)	296	95	174	327	374	0.35	0.11	0.22	0.43	0.59
TRUenergy	83	98	322	265	270	0.13	0.16	0.52	0.40	0.40
Country Energy	29	8	0	3	3	0.61	0.11	0.00	0.03	0.02
Powerdirect	-	8	6	4	4	-	0.04	0.03	0.02	0.03
Red Energy	-	-	5	12	19	-	-	0.34	0.44	0.56
Victoria Electricity	1	2	9	4	4	0.04	0.04	0.12	0.04	0.04
Simply Energy	8	13	13	33	131	0.23	0.19	0.15	0.39	1.22
Electricity Total	1,326	593	948	855	1,225	0.48	0.21	0.34	0.30	0.42
<i>Gas Retailer</i>										
AGL Sales	50	37	82	52	43	0.44	0.33	0.71	0.33	0.36
Origin Energy (Gas)	53	18	45	50	65	0.38	0.13	0.34	0.39	0.51
TRUenergy	42	22	121	108	133	0.25	0.13	0.69	0.59	0.69
Victoria Electricity	-	1	3	4	6	-	0.17	0.26	0.28	0.38
Simply Energy	-	1	2	12	17	-	0.14	0.14	0.66	0.94
Red Energy	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	2.96
Gas Total	145	79	253	226	270	0.34	0.18	0.56	0.45	0.57

Table C.23 Reconnection in the Same Name Data for Business Customers
2004-05 to 2008-09

<i>Electricity Retailer</i>	<i>Total Reconnections</i>					<i>Reconnections per 100 Customers</i>				
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	223	50	40	2	76	0.67	0.16	0.12	0.00	0.11
Origin Energy (CP)	43	2	23	64	19	0.16	0.01	0.13	0.30	0.07
Origin Energy (PC)	90	10	34	86	49	0.11	0.01	0.04	0.11	0.08
TRUenergy	36	31	117	97	102	0.06	0.05	0.19	0.15	0.15
Country Energy	16	0	0	0	1	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01
Powerdirect	0	8	3	4	1	0.00	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.01
Red Energy	-	-	1	2	9	-	-	0.07	0.07	0.27
Victoria Electricity	1	1	3	1	0	0.04	0.02	0.04	0.01	0.00
Simply Energy	6	8	8	8	41	0.17	0.12	0.09	0.09	0.38
Electricity Total	415	110	229	264	298	0.17	0.05	0.09	0.09	0.10
<i>Gas Retailer</i>										
Origin Energy (Gas)	-	7	23	24	32	-	0.05	0.17	0.19	0.25
Victoria Electricity	-	1	1	0	1	-	0.17	0.09	0.00	0.06
AGL Sales	-	0	6	1	4	-	0	0.05	0.01	0.03
Simply Energy	-	1	1	12	2	-	0.14	0.07	0.66	0.11
TRUenergy	-	3	58	54	73	-	0.02	0.33	0.29	0.38
Red Energy	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	1.97
Gas Total	-	12	89	91	116	-	0.03	0.20	0.18	0.24

* Retailers commenced reporting gas reconnections from 1 January 2006, so only six months of data was reported for 2005-06.

Table C.24 Budget Instalment Plan Data for Business Customers

2004-05 to 2008-09

<i>Electricity Retailer</i>	<i>Total Budget instalment plans</i>					<i>Budget instalment plans per 100 customers</i>				
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	280	221	191	170	396	0.70	0.64	0.58	0.27	0.56
AGL Sales (Queensland Electricity)	6	0	0	0	0	2.61	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Origin Energy (CP)	37	26	24	21	30	0.14	0.12	0.13	0.10	0.11
Origin Energy (PC)	435	378	339	318	387	0.51	0.45	0.42	0.42	0.61
TRUenergy	423	377	330	342	444	0.68	0.60	0.53	0.51	0.66
Country Energy	0	7	45	30	2	0.00	0.10	0.47	0.29	0.01
Powerdirect	60	152	15	6	6	0.40	0.83	0.07	0.03	0.04
Victoria Electricity	-	1	14	23	25	-	0.02	0.19	0.23	0.23
Momentum	-	3	6	0	10	-	0.25	0.14	0.00	0.17
Red Energy	-	-	3	13	18	-	-	0.20	0.48	0.53
Simply Energy	33	25	53	0	4	0.94	0.37	0.62	0.00	0.04
Electricity Total	1,274	1,190	1,020	923	1,322	0.47	0.45	0.37	0.32	0.46
<i>Gas Retailer</i>										
Origin Energy (Gas)	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Victoria Electricity	-	-	6	10	12	-	-	0.52	0.71	0.77
AGL Sales	27	20	23	19	34	0.24	0.18	0.20	0.12	0.29
Simply Energy	-	1	6	0	2	-	0.14	0.43	0.00	0.11
TRUenergy	46	53	44	54	82	0.27	0.31	0.25	0.29	0.43
Red Energy	-	-	-	0	1	-	-	-	0.00	0.49
Gas Total	73	74	79	83	131	0.17	0.17	0.18	0.16	0.28

C.6 Individual Retailer Graphs for Business Customers

Figure C.25 AGL Sales – Business Disconnections
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 business customers

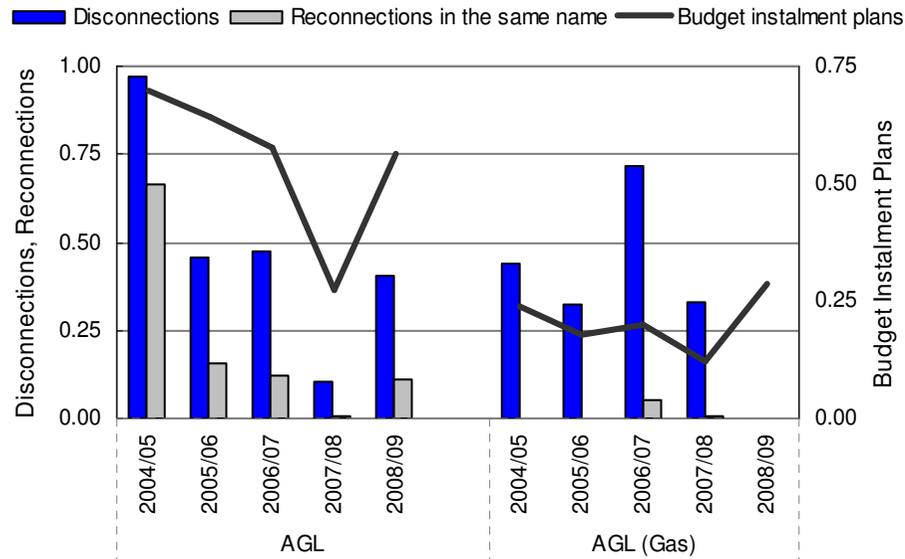


Figure C.26 Country Energy – Business Disconnections
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 business customers

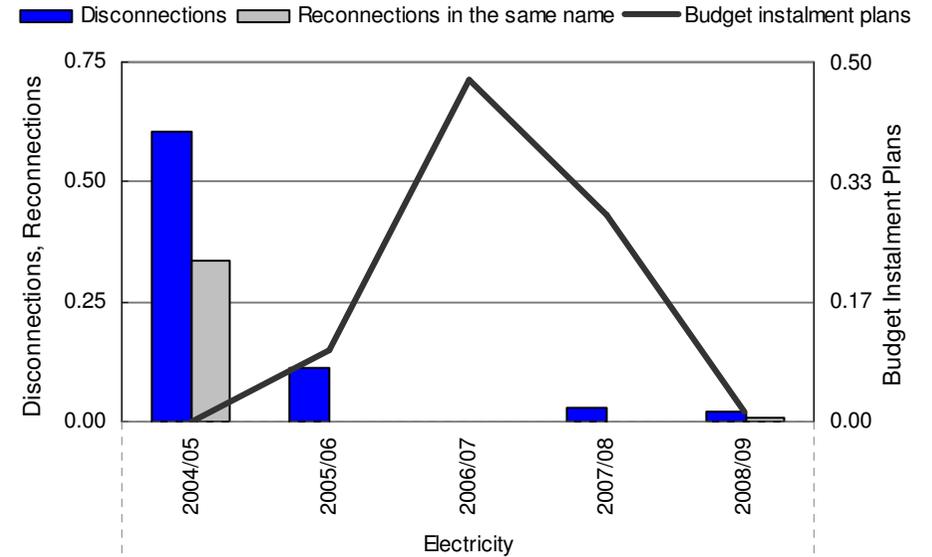


Figure C.27 Momentum – Business Disconnections
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 business customers

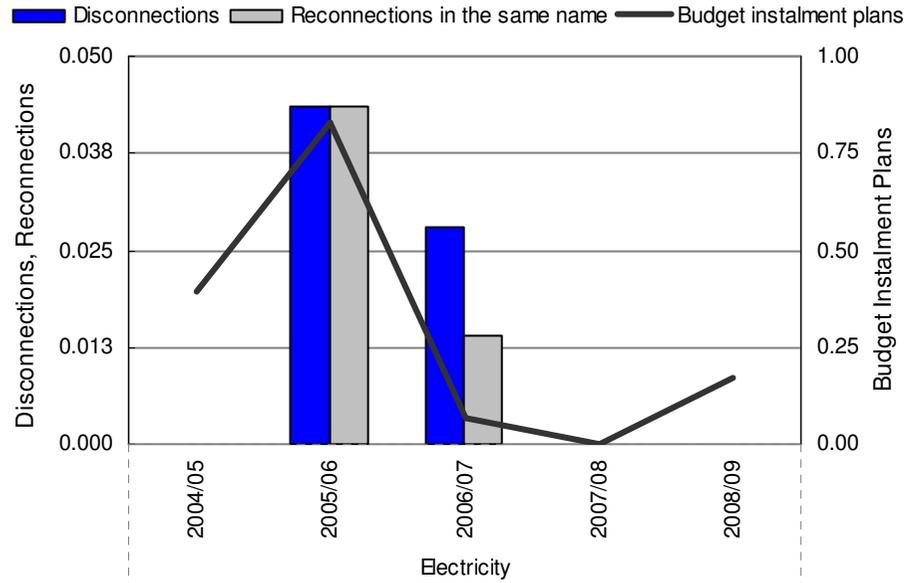


Figure C.28 Origin Energy – Business Disconnections
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 business customers

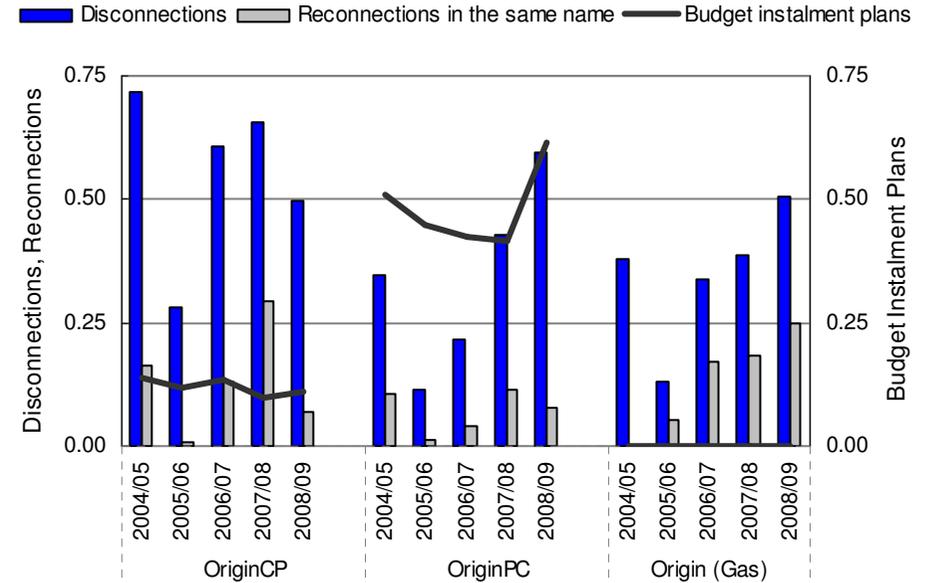


Figure C.29 Powerdirect – Business Disconnections
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 business customers

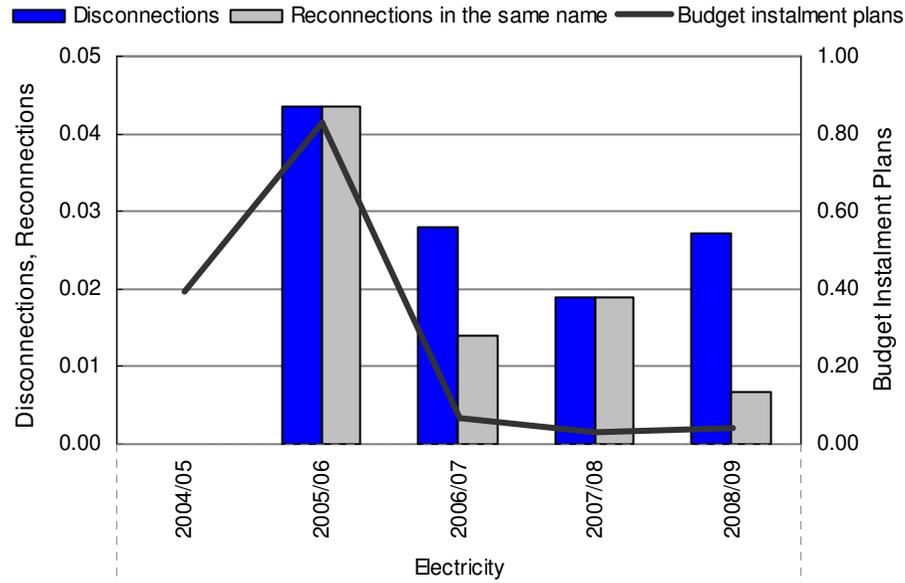


Figure C.30 Red Energy – Business Disconnections
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 business customers

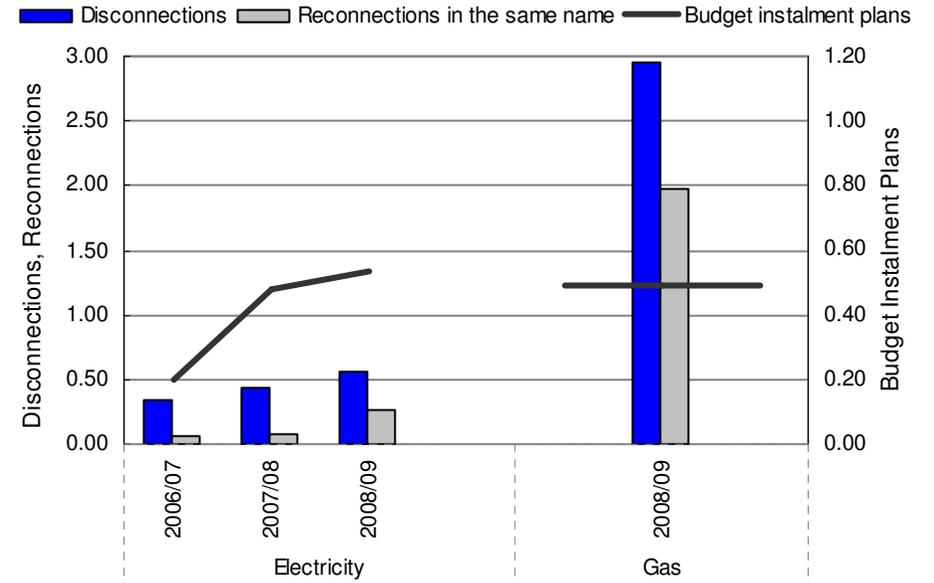


Figure C.31 Simply Energy – Business Disconnections
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 business customers

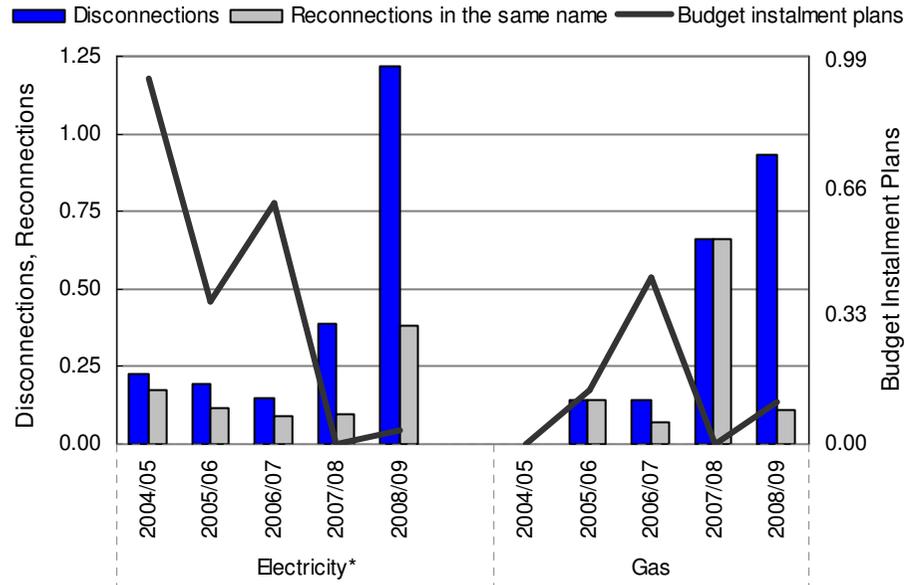


Figure C.32 TRUenergy – Business Disconnections
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 business customers

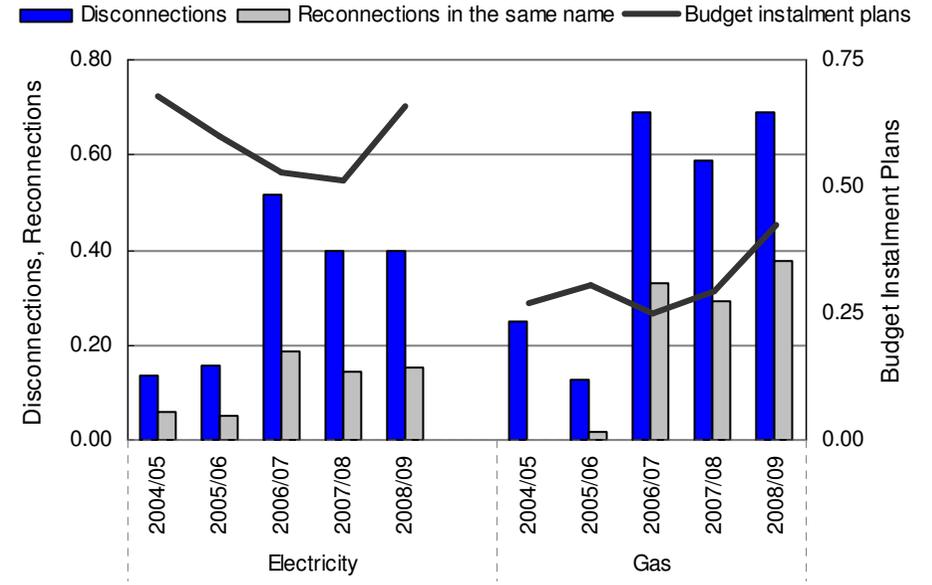
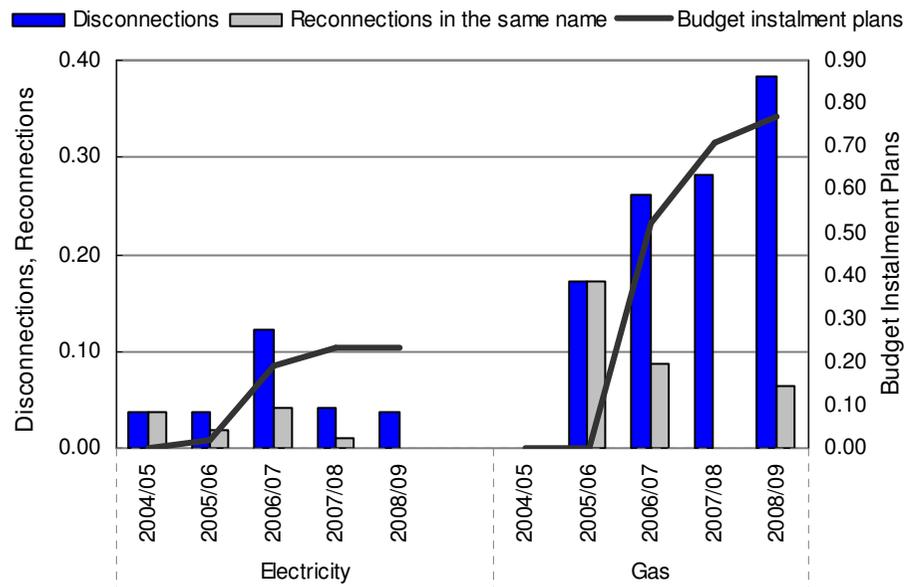


Figure C.33 Victoria Electricity – Business Disconnections
2004-05 to 2008-09 per 100 business customers



APPENDIX D – CALL CENTRE PERFORMANCE AND COMPLAINTS DATA

D.1 Call Centre Performance Data collected by Retailers

Table D.1 Retailers' Call Centre Performance Data – Electricity and Gas
2004-05 to 2008-09

<i>Retailer Name</i>	<i>Total calls to account lines forwarded to an operator</i>					<i>% calls forwarded to an operator answered within 30 seconds</i>				
	<i>2004-05</i>	<i>2005-06</i>	<i>2006-07</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>	<i>2004-05</i>	<i>2005-06</i>	<i>2006-07</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>
AGL Sales	2,039,933	2,599,891	2,134,659	1,975,676	1,210,905	71%	75%	80%	81%	62%
Origin Energy	1,704,161	1,520,238	1,504,085	1,356,217	1,300,345	69%	78%	72%	79%	81%
TRUenergy	1,122,740	949,433	859,861	816,839	821,649	80%	76%	78%	81%	76%
Country Energy	N/A*	N/A*	135,331	107,018	107,995	78%	80%	79%	83%	71%
Simply Energy	169,638	250,084	349,019	294,460	283,664	76%	79%	62%	81%	74%
Powerdirect	104,721	86,484	129,915	116,777	128,710	76%	90%	85%	88%	79%
Victoria Electricity	2,091	91,988	229,855	354,355	368,820	N/A	82%	36%	54%	60%
Momentum	963	9,955	37,954	14,983	11,283	94%	88%	74%	100%	85%
Red Energy	63,818	153,046	191,971	228,046	325,998	92%	88%	76%	60%	62%
Jackgreen	-	12,241	8,650	10,528	3,739	-	62%	71%	78%	78%
Australian Power & Gas	-	-	2,278	57,461	94,221	-	-	81%	73%	82%
Click Energy	-	-	244	1,696	3,401	-	-	95%	38%	75%
Neighbourhood Energy	-	-	573	28,630	71,787	-	-	57%	76%	70%
Dodo Power & Gas	-	-	-	14	2	-	-	-	0%	0%
Energy Australia	-	-	-	N/A*	N/A*	-	-	-	N/A	N/A
Diamond Energy	-	-	-	-	96	-	-	-	-	100%
AGL Sales (Qld)	5,857	12,853	7,687	-	-	100%	99%	86%	N/A	N/A
Sun Retail	499	434	924	469	83	96%	98%	99%	99%	82%
Total	5,214,421	5,686,868	5,593,006	5,363,169	4,732,698	73%	77%	75%	78%	72%

* Country Energy (2004-05 to 2005-06) and Energy Australia (2007-08 to 2008-09) reported national call data only, and have been excluded from this analysis for comparative purposes

D.2 Complaints Data collected by Retailers

Table D.2 Retailers' Complaints Data by Complaint Category
2007-08 to 2008-09

	<i>Complaints Billing</i>		<i>Complaints Transfers</i>		<i>Complaints Marketing</i>		<i>Complaints Other</i>	
	2007-08	2008-09	2007-08	2008-09	2007-08	2008-09	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	9,324	22,404	1,082	2,896	1,254	1,527	4,180	3,093
Origin Energy (CP)	224	161	26	23	18	18	56	37
Origin Energy (PC)	2,516	2,711	532	612	488	408	730	497
TRUenergy	1,626	1,844	0	247	0	100	1,652	1,098
Country Energy	72	45	0	5	0	200	212	76
Simply Energy	1,110	330	104	47	452	1,408	106	1,088
Powerdirect	1,196	1,068	34	19	34	5	56	66
Victoria Electricity	n/a	5,716	n/a	317	n/a	511	n/a	4,069
Momentum	20	38	8	2	0	2	16	8
Red Energy	266	326	44	56	274	295	158	167
Jackgreen	12	26	14	8	8	15	10	9
Australian Power & Gas	170	377	38	205	112	80	32	102
Click Energy	30	33	14	7	4	6	28	3
Energy Australia	0	7	0	16	0	191	0	16
Neighbourhood Energy	22	102	10	251	392	738	60	118
Electricity Total	16,588	35,188	1,906	4,711	3,036	5,504	7,296	10,447

* The Commission commenced collecting data against these complaint categories from 1 January 2008. 2007-08 data has been annualised in order to perform trend analysis

Table D.2 (cont.) Retailers' Complaints Data by Complaint Category
2007-08 to 2008-09

	<i>Complaints Billing</i>		<i>Complaints Transfers</i>		<i>Complaints Marketing</i>		<i>Complaints Other</i>	
	2007-08	2008-09	2007-08	2008-09	2007-08	2008-09	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	3,030	8,176	840	657	456	960	1,354	2,094
Origin Energy (Gas)	648	888	218	209	88	65	580	349
TRUenergy	484	265	0	74	0	31	448	171
Simply Energy	406	61	38	7	38	38	244	99
Victoria Electricity	n/a	168	n/a	39	n/a	46	n/a	96
Red Energy	14	46	8	20	80	31	22	21
Gas Total	4,582	9,604	1,104	1,006	662	1,171	2,648	2,830

* The Commission commenced collecting data against these complaint categories from 1 January 2008. 2007-08 data has been annualised in order to perform trend analysis

Table D.3 Retailers' Complaints Data per 100 customers
2004-05 to 2008-09

	<i>Total Complaints</i>					<i>Complaints per 100 customers</i>				
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AGL Sales	1,126	6,204	6,191	9,213	29,920	0.15	0.86	0.94	1.49	4.82
Origin Energy (CP)	554	453	344	319	239	0.33	0.33	0.30	0.31	0.17
Origin Energy (PC)	3,229	3,192	3,242	3,789	4,228	0.51	0.51	0.52	0.63	0.81
TRUenergy	1,832	3,159	3,500	2,891	3,289	0.32	0.56	0.65	0.52	0.58
Country Energy	204	163	431	292	326	0.39	0.25	0.56	0.40	0.44
Simply Energy	7,015	2,175	2,089	2,054	2,873	10.84	2.23	1.36	1.30	1.73
Powerdirect	503	328	1,428	1,442	1,158	1.90	1.07	3.43	3.38	3.51
Victoria Electricity	197	314	582	3,101	10,613	1.12	0.68	0.61	2.20	6.07
Momentum	39	212	517	150	50	60.00	8.30	3.73	1.31	0.68
Red Energy	149	499	881	744	844	1.11	0.79	0.98	0.68	0.65
Jackgreen	-	90	202	22	58	-	18.15	10.01	0.74	2.17
Australian Power & Gas	-	-	54	222	764	-	-	9.15	0.97	1.86
Click Energy	-	-	-	60	49	-	-	-	7.82	4.73
Energy Australia	-	-	-	-	230	-	-	-	-	3.85
Neighbourhood Energy	-	-	193	277	1,209	-	-	306.35	8.77	6.21
Electricity Total	14,848	16,790	19,654	24,576	55,850	0.64	0.71	0.81	1.00	2.22
<i>Gas Retailer</i>										
AGL Sales	654	1,345	2,072	3,358	11,887	0.13	0.26	0.42	0.70	2.42
Origin Energy (Gas)	2,121	1,997	1,795	1,592	1,511	0.39	0.36	0.32	0.29	0.28
TRUenergy	695	920	1,107	888	541	0.15	0.21	0.25	0.20	0.12
Simply Energy	-	333	244	1,298	205	-	0.39	0.18	0.97	0.15
Victoria Electricity	-	35	132	124	349	-	0.19	0.24	0.13	0.29
Red Energy	-	-	-	69	118	-	-	-	0.60	0.24
Gas Total	3,479	4,630	5,350	7,329	14,611	0.23	0.28	0.32	0.43	0.80

D.3 Individual Retailer Performance Graphs

The five year trend in performance, where available, for individual retailers is depicted in the following graphs for those retailers with two or more active financial years in the retail energy market.

Figure D.1 AGL Sales – Call Centre Performance
2004-05 to 2008-09

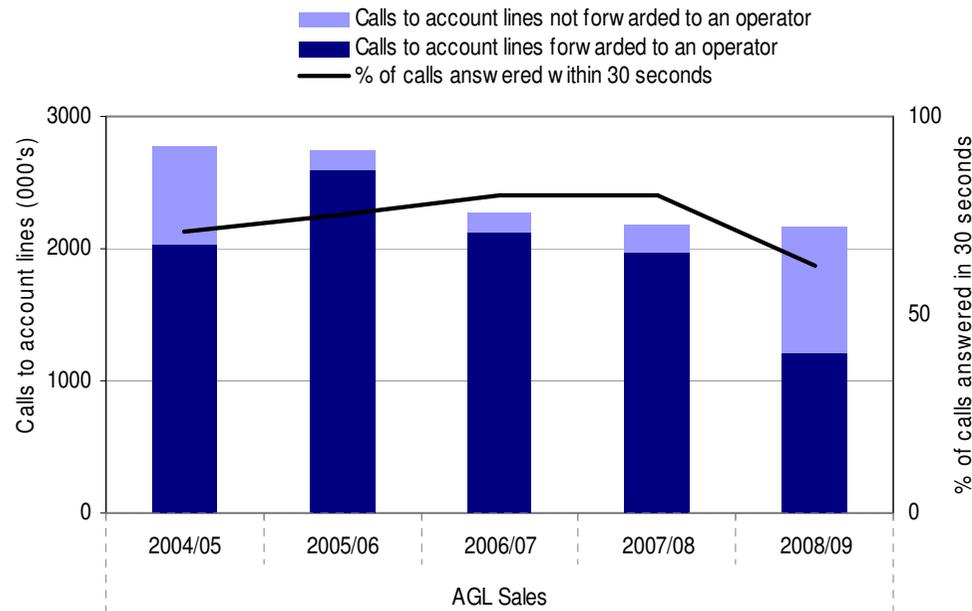


Figure D.2 AGL Sales – Complaints
2004-05 to 2008-09

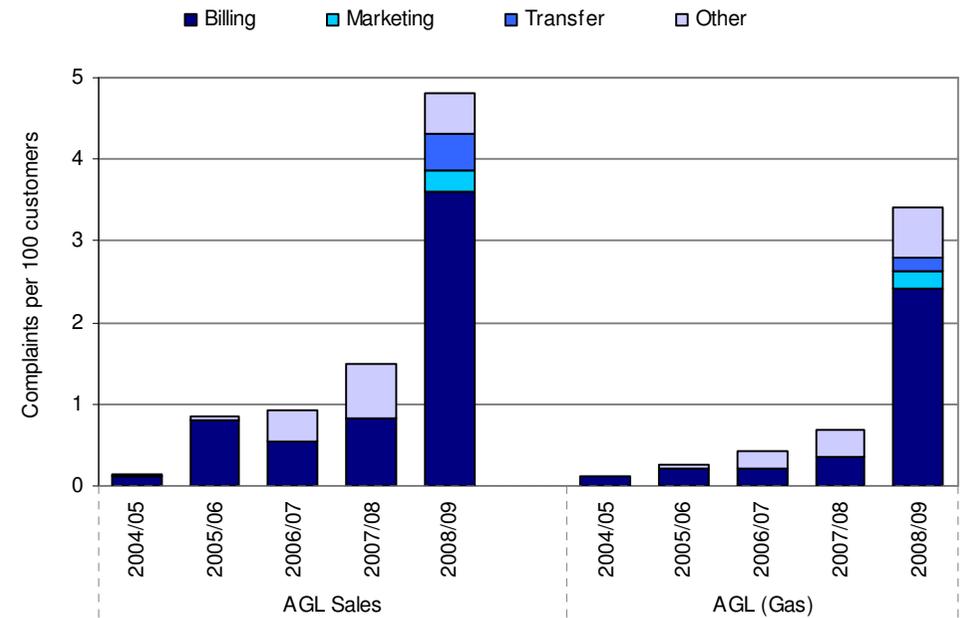


Figure D.3 Australian Power & Gas – Call Centre Performance
2006-07 to 2008-09

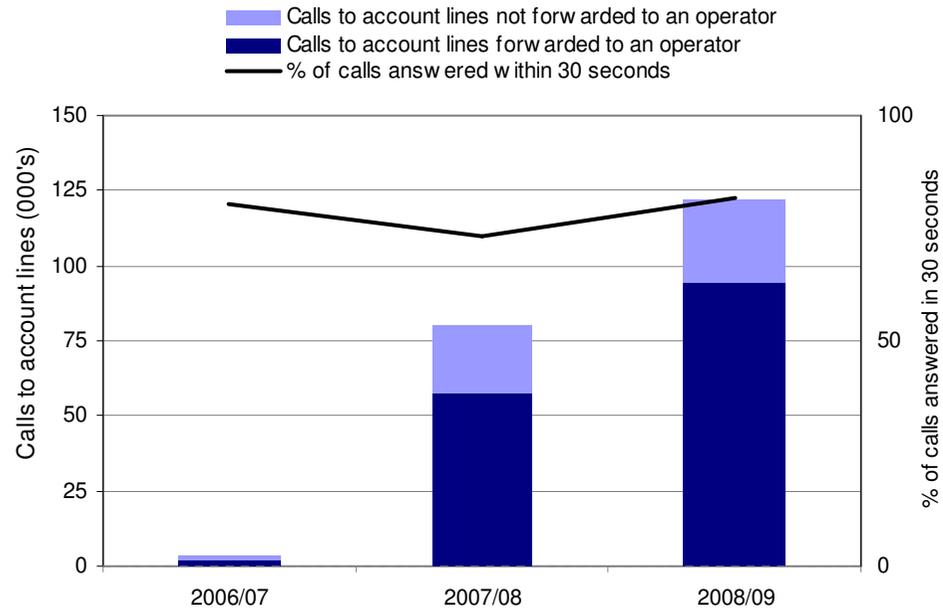


Figure D.4 Australian Power & Gas – Complaints
2006-07 to 2008-09

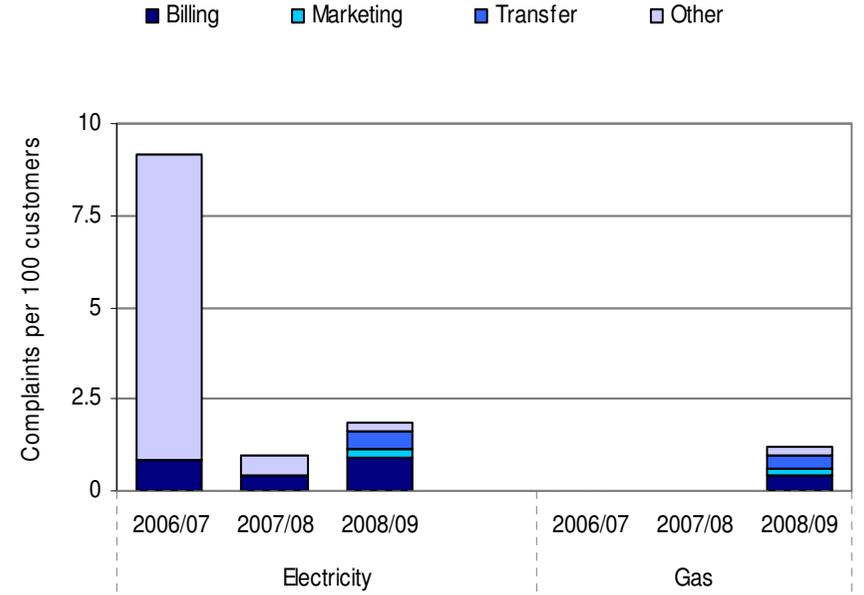


Figure D.5 Click Energy – Call Centre Performance
2006-07 to 2008-09

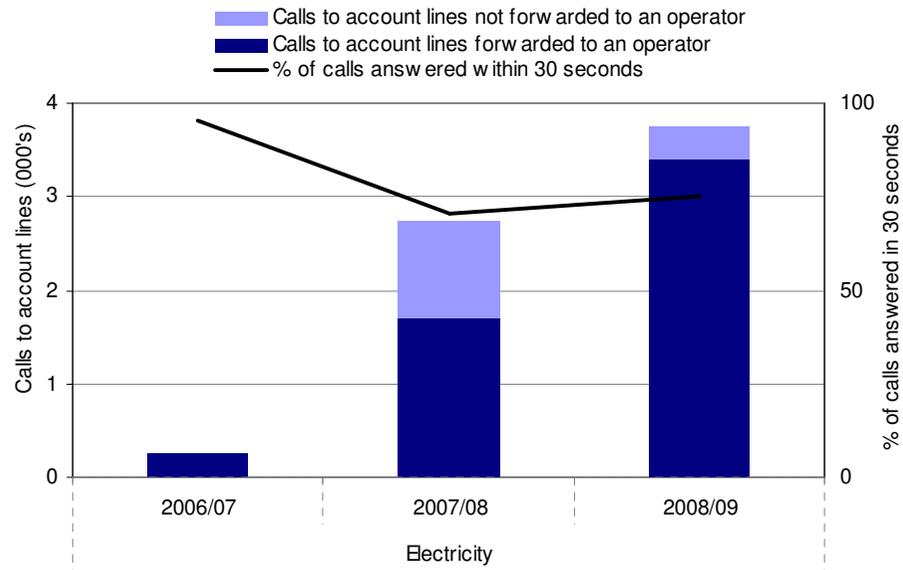


Figure D.6 Click Energy – Complaints
2006-07 to 2008-09

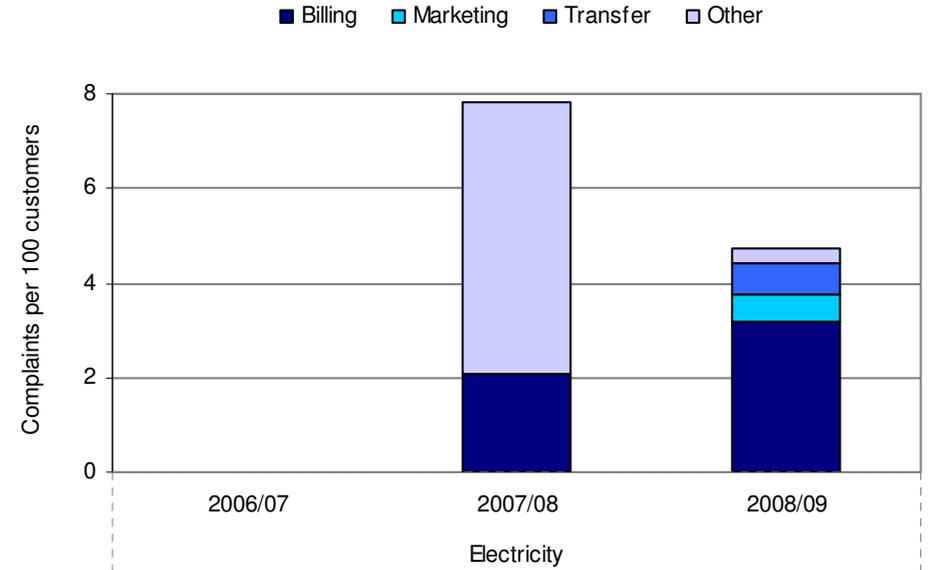
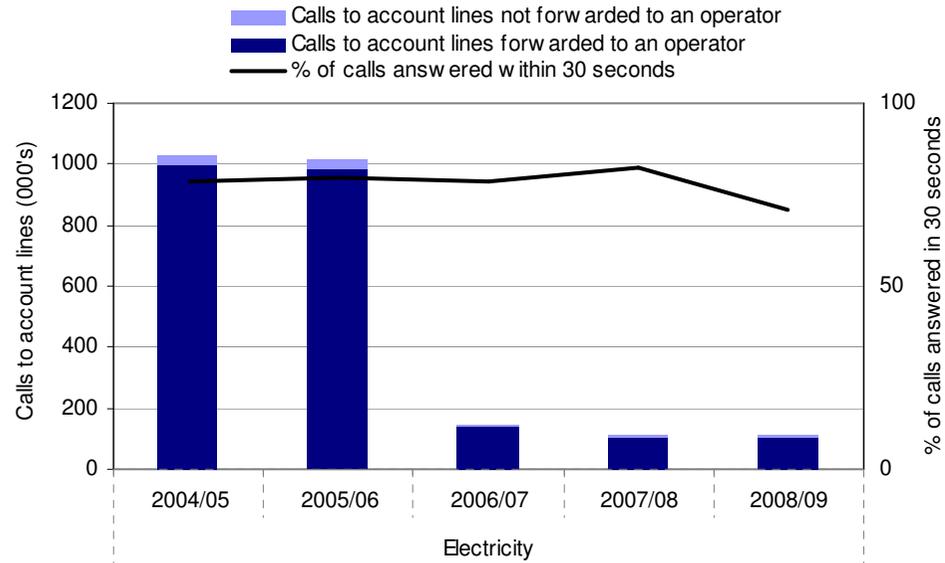


Figure D.7 Country Energy – Call Centre Performance
2004-05 to 2008-09



* Country Energy only commenced reporting data specific to its Victorian customers from July 2006. Prior to this, national call centre data was reported.

Figure D.8 Country Energy – Complaints
2004-05 to 2008-09

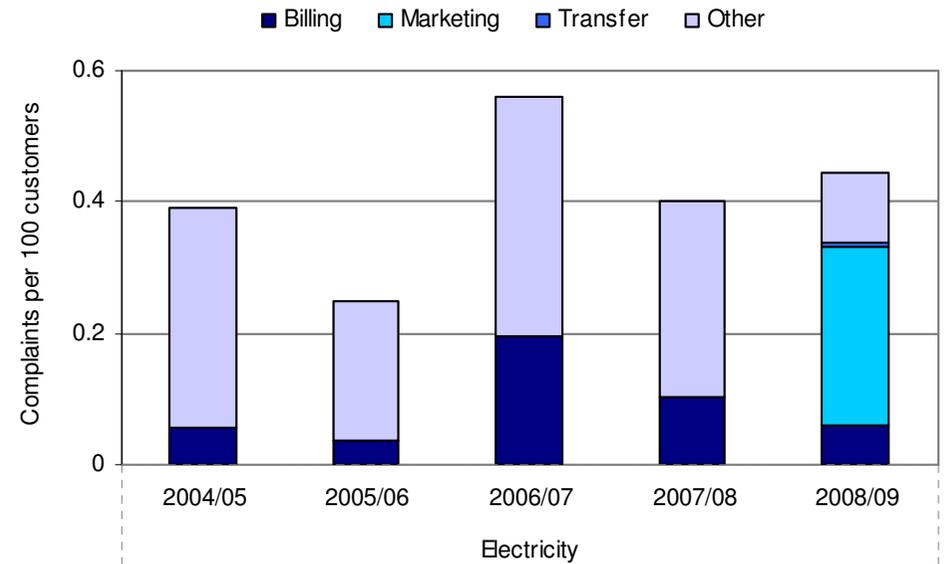


Figure D.9 Jackgreen – Call Centre Performance
2005-06 to 2008-09

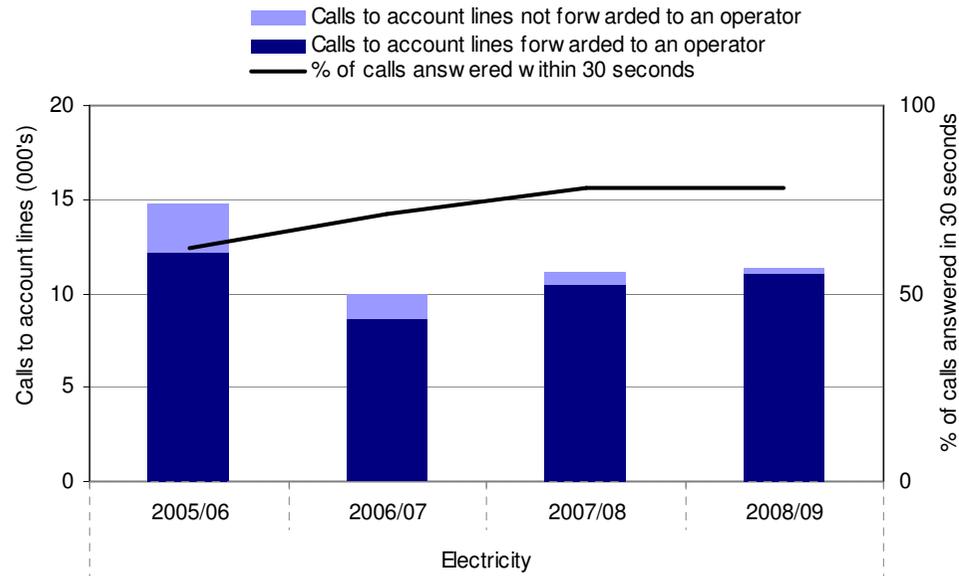


Figure D.10 Jackgreen – Complaints
2005-06 to 2008-09

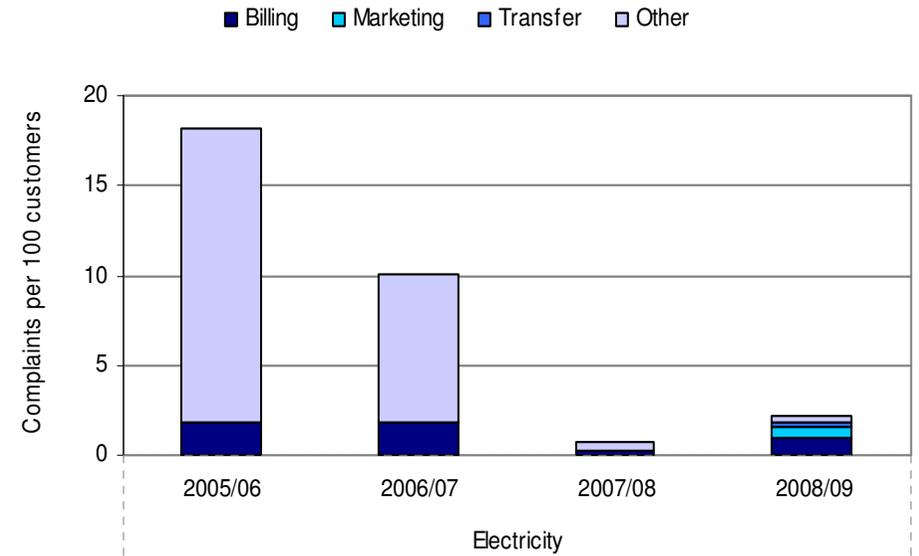


Figure D.11 Momentum – Call Centre Performance
2004-05 to 2008-09

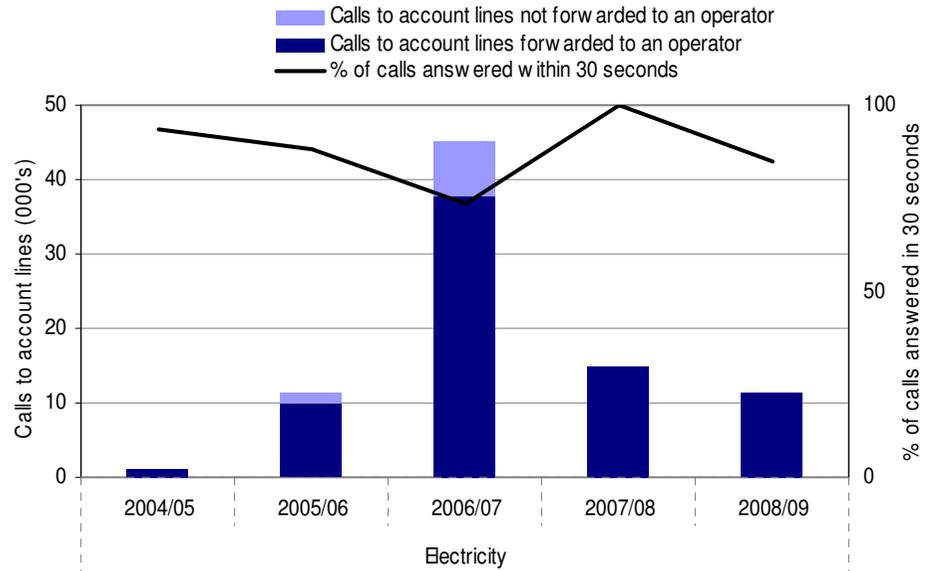


Figure D.12 Momentum – Complaints
2004-05 to 2008-09

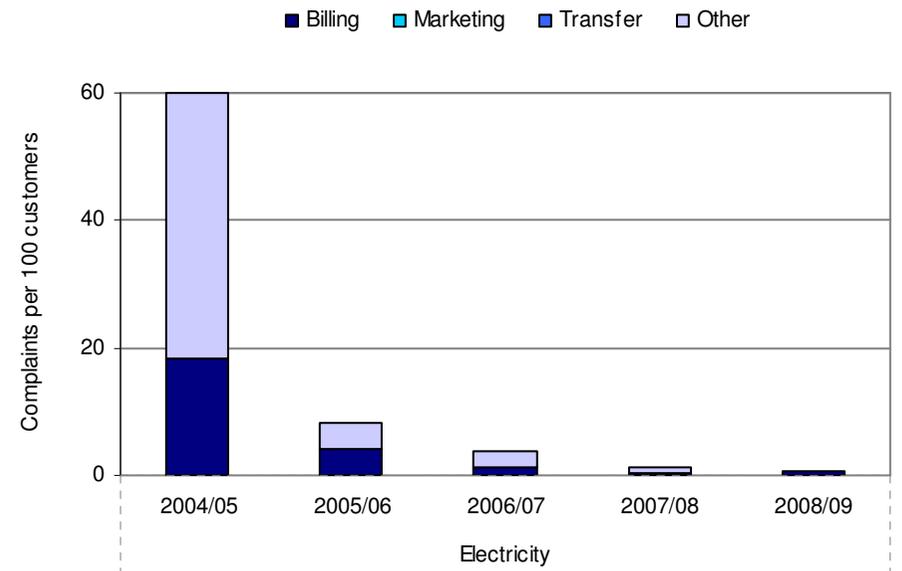


Figure D.13 Neighbourhood Energy – Call Centre Performance
2006-07 to 2008-09

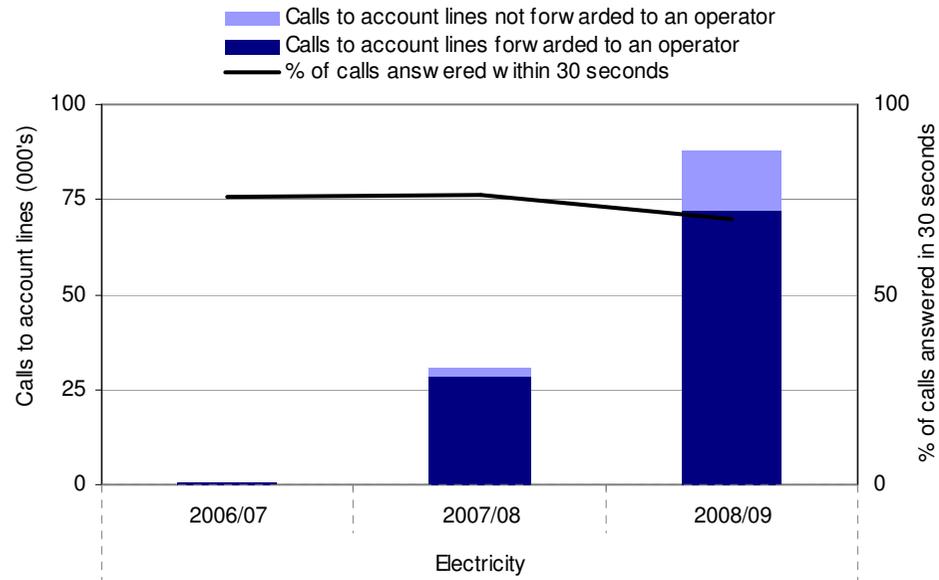


Figure D.14 Neighbourhood Energy – Complaints
2007-08 to 2008-09

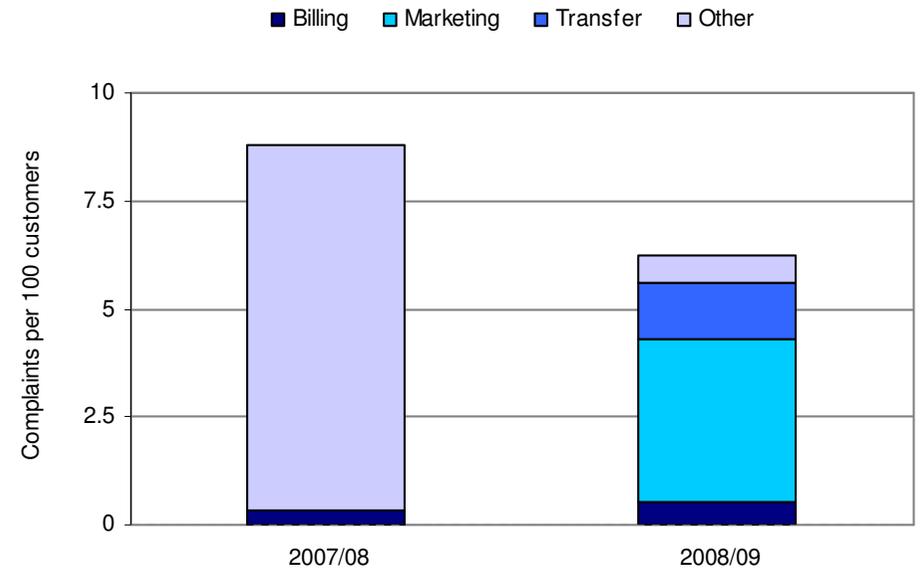


Figure D.15 Origin Energy – Call Centre Performance
2004-05 to 2008-09

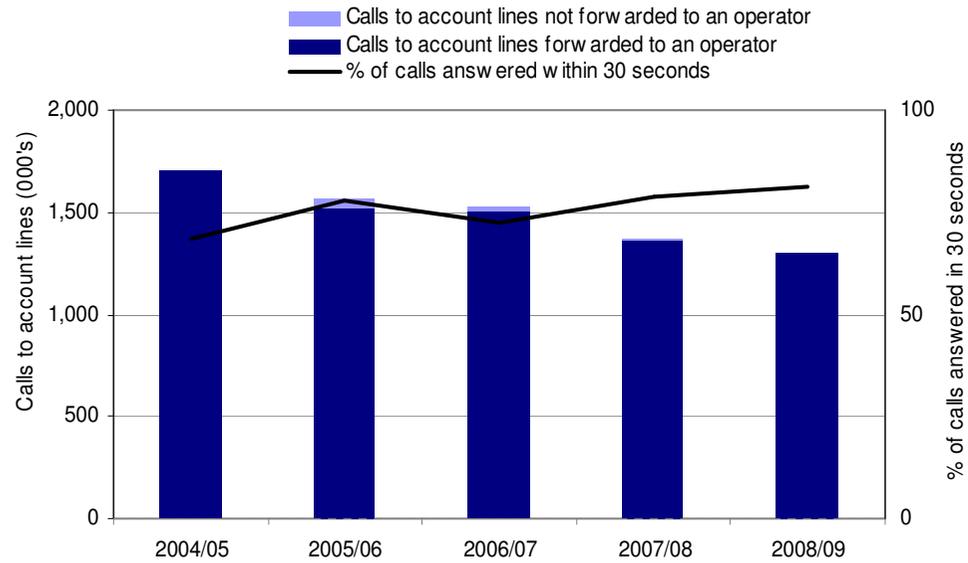


Figure D.16 Origin Energy – Complaints
2004-05 to 2008-09

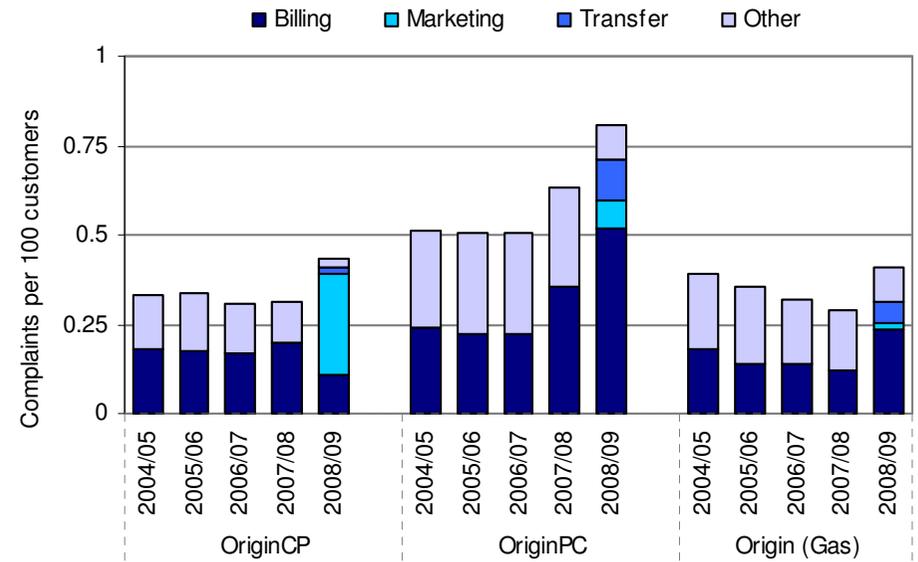


Figure D.17 Powerdirect – Call Centre Performance
2004-05 to 2008-09

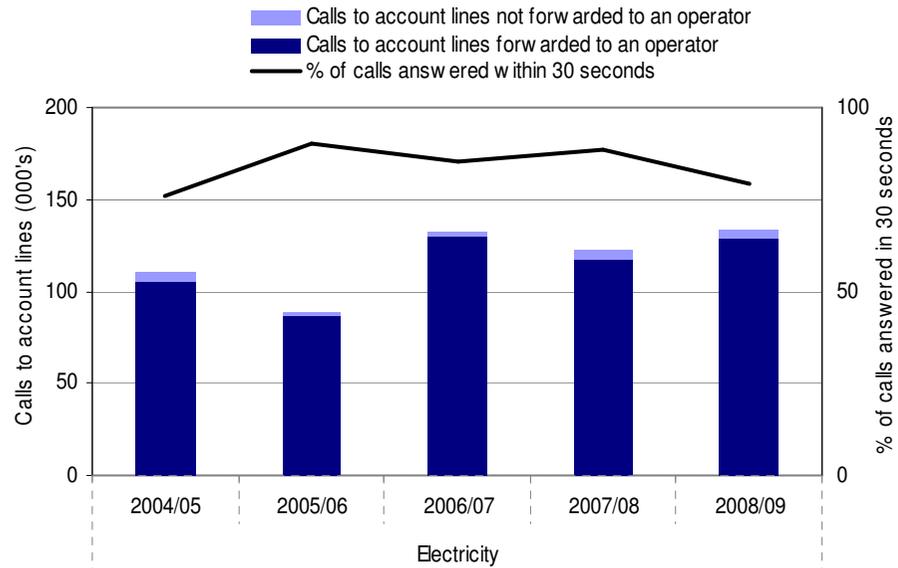


Figure D.18 Powerdirect – Complaints
2004-05 to 2008-09

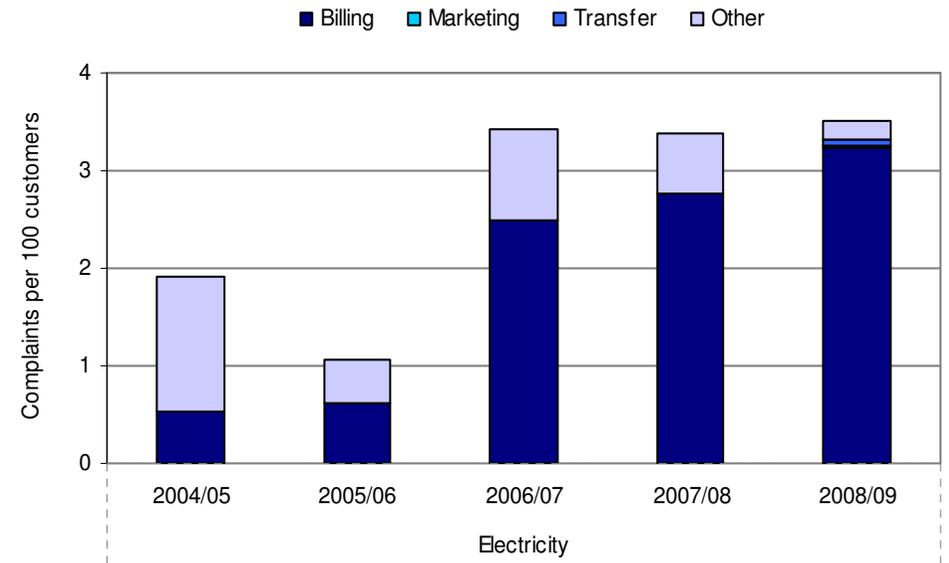


Figure D.19 Red Energy – Call Centre Performance
2004-05 to 2008-09

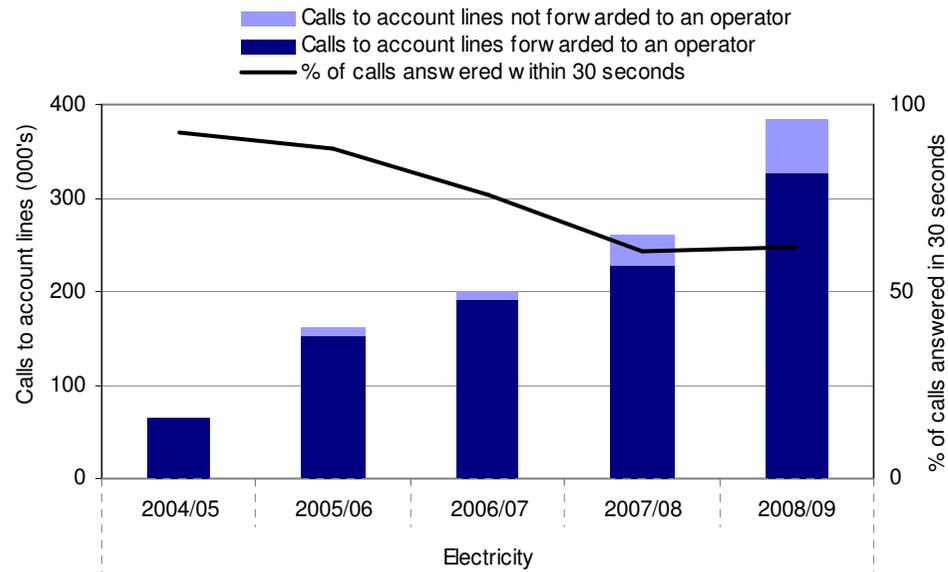


Figure D.20 Red Energy – Complaints
2004-05 to 2008-09

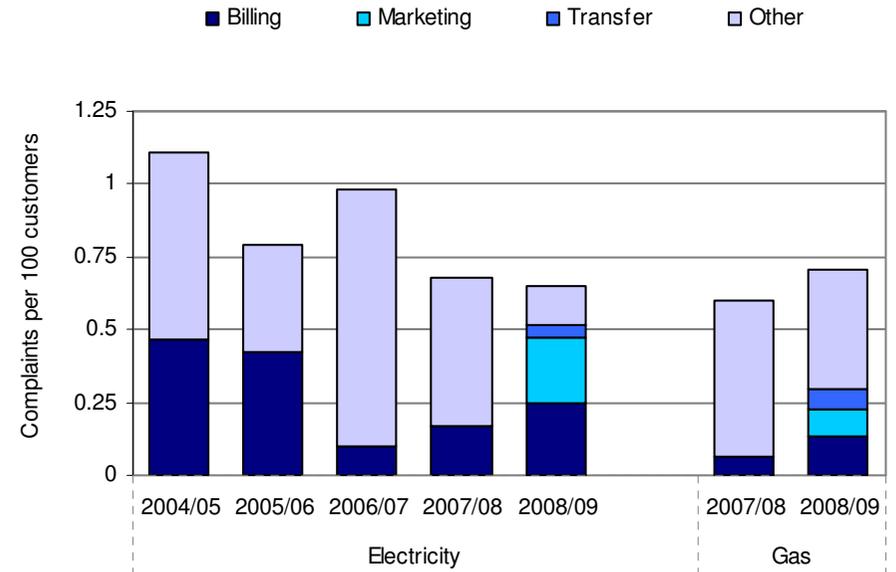


Figure D.21 Simply Energy – Call Centre Performance
2004-05 to 2008-09

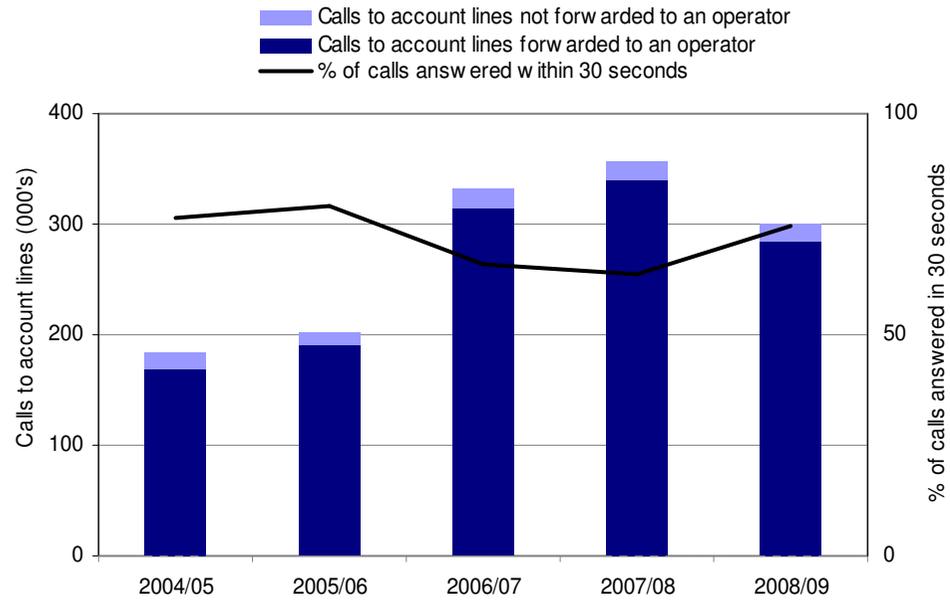


Figure D.22 Simply Energy – Complaints
2005-06 to 2008-09

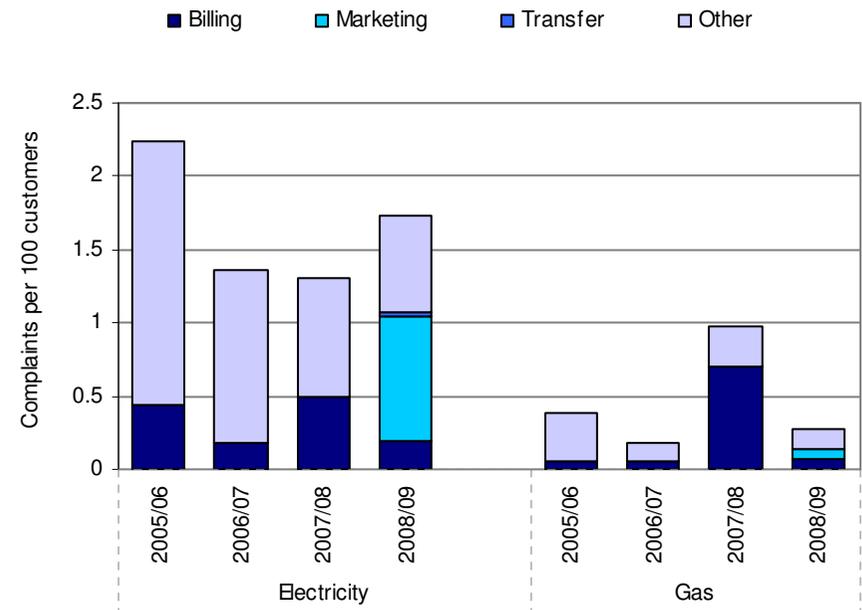


Figure D.23 TRUenergy – Call Centre Performance
2004-05 to 2008-09

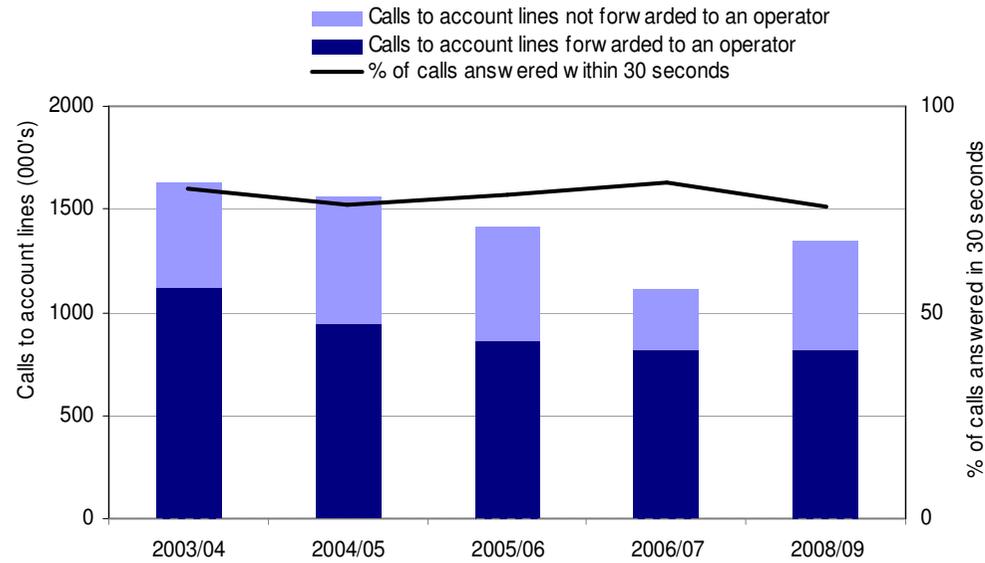


Figure D.24 TRUenergy – Complaints
2004-05 to 2008-09

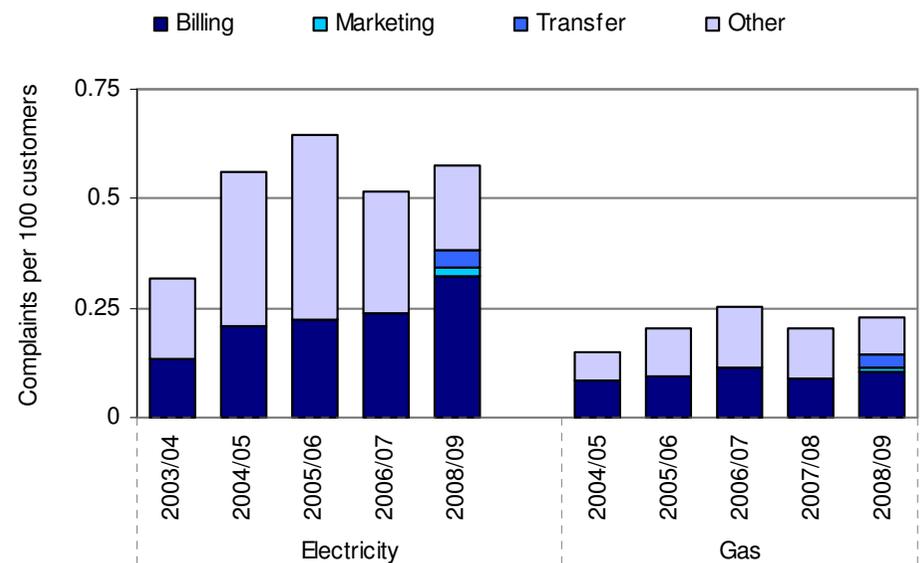
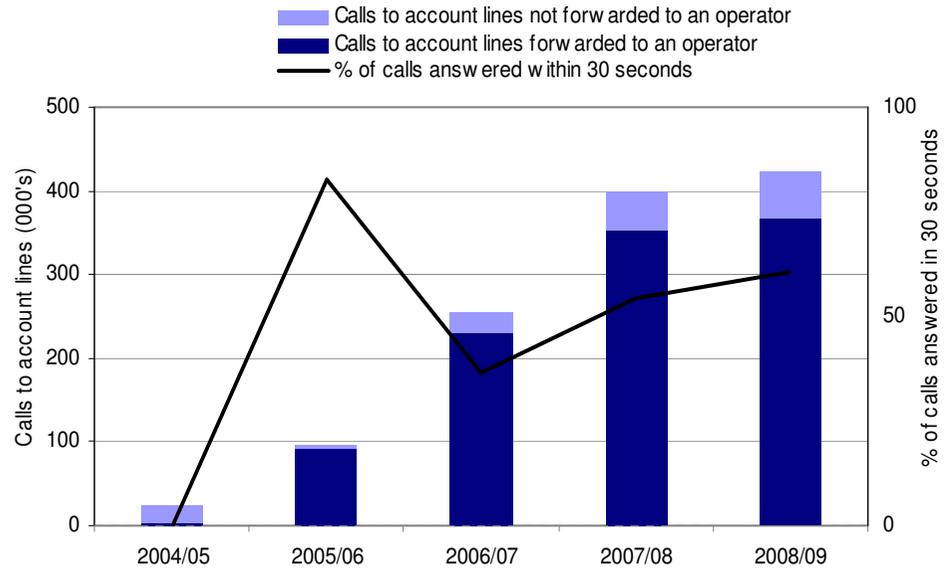
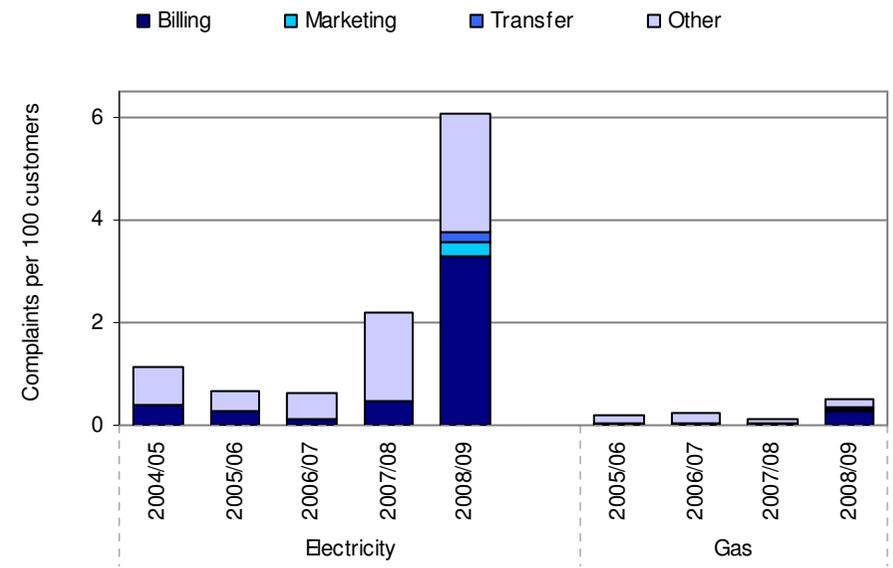


Figure D.25 Victoria Electricity – Call Centre Performance
2004-05 to 2008-09



* 2004/05 calls answered within 30 seconds for Victoria Electricity are not depicted as they were disproportionate to their more recent data and it would appear that Victoria Electricity used a different definition for that reporting period.

Figure D.26 Victoria Electricity – Complaints
2004-05 to 2008-09



D.4 Customer Service Benchmarking Australia (CSBA) report on Victorian Energy Call Centre Performance

The full report is available on the ESC website www.esc.vic.gov.au.

Table D.4 Connection times and Call Centre performance
2006-07 to 2008-09

	<i>Average time to speak to an operator</i>			<i>% calls answered within 30 seconds</i>		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Victorian energy sector	37 sec	77 sec	94 sec	70 %	67%	64%
Australian energy sector	38 sec	73 sec	83 sec	68 %	70%	65%

Table D.5 Agent manner and Enquiry handling skills
2006-07 to 2008-09

	<i>Calls exhibiting best practice manner</i>			<i>Probed customer needs frequently</i>			<i>Frequency of operator providing an outcome</i>		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Victorian energy sector	75 %	74%	74%	74 %	70%	71%	88 %	83%	80%
Australian energy sector	80 %	77%	74%	76 %	73%	70%	90 %	85%	82%

Table D.6 Operator manner with Hardship enquiries
2008-09

	<i>VIC Energy Companies</i>	<i>AGL Sales</i>	<i>Country Energy</i>	<i>Energy Australia</i>	<i>Jackgreen</i>	<i>Origin Energy</i>	<i>Powerdirect</i>	<i>Red Energy</i>	<i>Simply Energy</i>	<i>TRUenergy</i>	<i>Victoria Electricity</i>
	All / Hardship	All / Hardship	All / Hardship	All / Hardship	All / Hardship	All / Hardship	All / Hardship	All / Hardship	All / Hardship	All / Hardship	All / Hardship
Agent Manner	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Best practice +	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

Table D.7 Operator skill with Hardship enquiries
2008-09

	<i>VIC Energy Companies</i>	<i>AGL Sales</i>	<i>Country Energy</i>	<i>Energy Australia</i>	<i>Jackgreen</i>	<i>Origin Energy</i>	<i>Powerdirect</i>	<i>Red Energy</i>	<i>Simply Energy</i>	<i>TRUenergy</i>	<i>Victoria Electricity</i>
	All / Hardship	All / Hardship	All / Hardship	All / Hardship	All / Hardship	All / Hardship	All / Hardship	All / Hardship	All / Hardship	All / Hardship	All / Hardship
Agent Skill	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
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
Aggregate Score	80 / 81	74 / 84	83 / 93	80 / 90	78 / 79	83 / 86	77 / 79	78 / 77	78 / 69	83 / 79	86 / 69

D.5 Data reported by EWOV

Table D.8 Complaints received for full investigation by EWOV
2005-06 to 2008-09

	Affordability Complaints				Disconnection Complaints*				Other Complaints				Total Complaints*			
	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2006/07	2007/08	2007/08	2008/09	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Electricity																
AGL Sales	486	441	1,252	2,020	30	26	45	81	385	391	302	438	871	832	1,554	2,458
Country Energy	13	21	17	9	1	1	0	0	22	25	13	6	35	46	30	15
Simply Energy	144	105	136	171	17	8	6	15	105	107	52	78	249	212	188	249
Jackgreen	1	4	5	9	0	0	2	0	9	19	2	6	10	23	7	15
Momentum Energy	2	8	23	10	0	0	1	0	4	45	8	3	6	53	31	13
Origin Energy (CP&PC)	807	796	749	714	39	109	164	122	419	449	192	152	1,226	1,245	941	866
Powerdirect	116	73	66	48	8	0	4	7	55	67	25	12	171	140	91	60
Red Energy	44	53	70	85	22	12	15	7	20	33	16	37	64	86	86	122
TRUenergy	438	283	238	391	26	15	15	19	305	258	101	76	743	541	339	467
Australian Power & Gas	0	0	15	37	0	0	1	0	0	0	8	42	0	0	23	79
Victoria Electricity	23	88	122	208	2	9	6	5	47	139	76	87	70	227	198	295
Aurora Energy	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Energy Australia	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	5
Click Energy	0	0	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	5	8
Integral Energy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Neighbourhood Energy	0	0	0	22	0	0	0	1	0	0	10	62	0	0	10	84
Electricity totals	2,074	1,872	2,696	3,731	145	180	259	257	1,371	1,533	808	1,007	3,445	3,405	3,504	4,738

* Disconnection complaint numbers are a subset of Affordability complaints. Therefore, Affordability + Other Complaints = Total Complaints.

Table D.8 (cont) Complaints received for full investigation by EWOV
2005-06 to 2008-09

	Affordability Complaints				Disconnection Complaints*				Other Complaints				Total Complaints*			
	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2006/07	2007/08	2007/08	2008/09	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Gas																
AGL Sales	216	195	543	1,059	18	18	34	46	151	162	174	255	367	357	717	1,314
Simply Energy	61	46	47	53	13	3	2	7	77	42	25	32	138	88	72	85
Origin Energy	129	210	180	233	28	101	74	78	125	113	104	78	254	323	284	311
TRUenergy	173	116	74	124	29	19	4	16	118	116	54	48	291	232	128	172
Victoria Electricity	8	31	46	74	3	10	7	3	15	50	31	44	23	81	77	118
Australian Power & Gas	0	0	2	8	0	0	0	2	0	0	4	29	0	0	6	37
Energy Australia	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	7
Red Energy	0	0	1	16	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	13	0	0	3	29
Gas totals	587	598	890	1,570	91	151	121	155	486	483	394	503	1,073	1,081	1,287	2,073
Dual Fuel																
AGL Sales	2	1	10	4	0	0	0	0	5	7	7	4	7	8	17	8
Simply Energy	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	5	2	0	0
Origin Energy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	10	3	6	3	10	3	6
TRUenergy	57	26	10	5	0	0	0	0	39	22	4	0	96	48	14	5
Victoria Electricity	1	5	25	17	0	0	0	0	4	13	10	10	5	18	35	27
Australian Power & Gas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	2	1
Red Energy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	13	0	3	4	13	0	3
Dual fuel totals	62	33	45	26	0	0	0	0	58	66	26	24	120	99	71	50
ENERGY TOTALS	2,723	2,503	3,631	5,327	236	331	380	412	1,915	2,082	1,228	1,534	4,585	4,859	4,862	6,861

* Disconnection complaint numbers are a subset of Affordability complaints. Therefore, Affordability + Other Retail Complaints = Total Complaints.

Table D.9 **Transfer and Marketing Complaints received by EWOV**
2004-05 to 2008-09

	<i>Electricity Cases</i>	<i>Gas Cases</i>	<i>Dual Fuel Cases</i>	<i>Total Cases</i>
2004-05	2,127	711	176	3,014
2005-06	2,239	727	117	3,083
2006-07	2,872	928	289	4,089
2007-08	3,880	1,431	212	5,523
2008-09	8,038	3,340	150	11,528