

Electricity Smart Meter Public Forum – 13 May 2010.

Further to my verbal comments made at the ESC Smart Meter (SM) Public Forum on 13/5/10, here are the details as requested –

1. Electricity customers, who generally are the premise occupier (ie tenant), should be given information on the AMI roll-out and the smart meter, the function & responsibility of the DBs and that of the retailers and an advice that for the time being their retailer, supply and tariff (apart from the SM levy) will remain unchanged. This information should be in an addressed envelope, as not to confuse it with junk-mail by electricity customers. Although I understand that some DBs are already doing this and are also sending out two mailed advance notices by post, I am aware of at least one case where this seemed not to have been done.

The DPI information flyer states that the Vic Gov will send out introductory letters in addition to the two letters from DBs. The government and DB letters should clearly state that for the time being, and until further advised, the electricity supply arrangements with retailers will remain unchanged and the new meters will be used in the same manner as the old meters, including being manually read by meter readers. This will mitigate misunderstanding and confusion by the public.

2. As many electricity & gas customers are not aware or forget who their DBs and retailers are, their contact details and their functions & responsibilities, opportunity should be made to have a durable label on each meter board stating the name of the distributor (ie DB) and the retailer, their contact details and briefly their main functions (eg: contact the distributor for power failure, contact the retailer for billing, connection, etc).

Although electricity bills identify the retailers, in emergencies and for new premises' owners or tenants this information is somewhat cumbersome to obtain.

3. With the introduction of interval metering and several time of use (ToU) tariff options, the ESC together with Consumer Affairs Vic should introduce a number of standard hypothetical annual usage pattern scenarios (eg: Scenario A, Scenario B, Scenario C, etc) to which retailers can quote to customers.

At present, retailers and their marketing contractors & sub-contractors, especially their itinerant door-to-door pedlars, are providing inaccurate, distorted and grossly misleading information. This will get worse and possibly unmanageable when retailers will start to make use of the different tariff options made possible with smart meters.

Tom Rado