

29 January 2021

Ms Stephanie Flechas
Australian Energy Market Commission
PO Box A2449
Sydney South NSW 1235

Dear Ms Flechas

AEMC Draft Determination – Billing contents and billing requirements – RRC0036

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the AEMC Bill Contents and Billing Requirements Draft Determination (the **Draft Determination**).

The comments set out in this letter reflect the views of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (**EWOQ**), Energy & Water Ombudsman New South Wales (**EWON**), Energy & Water Ombudsman South Australia (**EWOSA**) and Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria (**EWOV**).

We have reviewed the Draft Determination and support in principle the draft decision reached by the Australian Energy Market Commission, save for one concern which is set out below. We reiterate our collective support for the introduction of the proposed reforms, which aim to improve consumer experiences with and understanding of energy bills.

We note one point of concern in the Draft Determination, particularly that of the guideline development principles put forward on pages 30-31 of the document. While we believe these principles address the key issues relevant to the development of any subsequent guidelines, we propose that the first principle (concerning consumer protections and the importance of innovation, competition and choice) should be separated into two principles to ensure that consumer protections are not unduly compromised. The principle as drafted reads:

1. The need for consumer protections for small customers, while also enabling retail market innovation, competition and consumer choice.

It is suggested that this instead become two separate principles – one for consumer protections and another for supporting innovation, competition and consumer choice. The combining of these two very distinct issues into one principle could dilute the importance of consumer protections as a guiding principle. Consumers are at the heart of the original rule change request, and with bills representing a major way in which providers interact with their customers it is important that consumer protections are ensured in any mandatory billing guideline.

A single principle in support of consumer protections would signal the significance of these safeguards. To make consumer protections subject to the interests of innovation, competition and choice within the principle itself does not place sufficient emphasis on this issue.

It is hoped that in all other regards this decision will be confirmed and that the matter will progress to the Australian Energy Regulator (**AER**) to develop a mandatory guideline for the content and format of energy bills. In relation to the various other issues raised in our initial submission and in the Draft Determination, we look forward to the opportunity to comment further on these matters as part of the planned industry consultation by the AER set out in the Draft Determination.

Yours sincerely



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