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Chamari Pushpamali
Policy Officer
Essential Services Commission of South Australia
GPO Box 2605
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By email reviews@escosa.sa.gov.au

2 September 2026

Dear Chamari,

**Submission to the Essential Services Commission of South Australia:
Review of Consumer Protections for NEM-Connected Distributors**

The Energy and Water Ombudsman (SA) Limited (EWOSA) welcomes the opportunity to submit to the Essential Services Commission of South Australia (Commission) on the Draft Decision for the Review of Consumer Protections for NEM-Connected Distributors.

EWOSA is the independent energy and water ombudsman scheme in South Australia. It receives, investigates and facilitates the resolution of complaints by customers with regard to (*inter alia*) the connection, supply or sale of electricity, gas or water.

EWOSA supports most aspects of the Draft Decision. In particular, we strongly support:

- extending the existing enquiries, complaints and dispute resolution general obligations in the Small-Scale Electricity Networks Code (SSENC) to apply to all NEM-connected distributors, which includes a requirement to participate in an Ombudsman scheme
- requiring that, where NEM-connected distributors also retail electricity, they include EWOSA's contact details (telephone number, email address and website) on customer bills
- extending life-support protections to customers of NEM-connected distributors
- including the protections for consumers of NEM-connected distributors in the SSENC, rather than in individual licences.

EWOSA also stands ready to work with the Commission and provide complaints and case data for any analysis of the potential need for reliability service standards, customer service standards and additional performance reporting requirements for NEM-connected distributors in the future.

However, there are two areas of protections for customers where we have concerns:

- customer communications
- obligations prior to disconnection.

These are discussed below.

Customer communications

While EWOSA supports extending the existing customer communications general obligation in the SSEC (Clause 2.3) to also apply to NEM-connected distributors, we believe a requirement similar to that in the Water Retail Code – Major Retailers, such that licensees should utilise the customer's reasonable preferred method of communication when communicating with customers, would further strengthen customer protections.

Obligations prior to disconnection

We are concerned that there may be a lack of requirements regarding distributor notification of disconnection to their customers in proposed Clause 7.7 of the SSEC. EWOSA also notes the comment in the Draft Decision that Condition 1.14 in the Australian Energy Regulator's Network Exemptions Guideline, regarding disconnection and payment difficulties, does not apply to parts of the operations of CPE Tonsley Pty Ltd and the Municipal Council of Roxby Downs. Together, these providers supply electricity to around 2,150 residential customers and 210 non-residential customers (Table 3 in the Draft Decision).

Customers experiencing payment difficulties are amongst the most vulnerable and it would be beneficial to them for their NEM-connected distributor to provide them with disconnection warning notices if they are at risk of disconnection. These notices could include the likely date of disconnection, the reason(s) for the possible disconnection and advice on what needs to be done to avoid disconnection.

If existing Clause 5.3.2 of the SSEC will also apply to NEM-connected distributors, then our concerns would be mitigated significantly.

The recent draft determination by the Australian Energy Market Commission on "Streamlining Payment Difficulty Protections" proposes requiring retailer engagement through at least two communication channels for vulnerable customers at risk of disconnection and we believe something similar could be applied to NEM-connected distributors (as well as other small-scale electricity networks).

Thank you for consideration of this submission. Should you require further information or have any enquiries regarding this submission, please contact me at antony.clarke@ewosa.com.au or on (08) 8216 1861.

Yours sincerely



Antony Clarke
Policy and Governance Manager