

By Email to: energy.submissions@esc.vic.gov.au

26 November 2017

Hi,

I am just an average home consumer of Victorian Energy Services and I am writing to provide feedback on the proposed draft proposal:

Fixed benefit periods - notification obligations for energy retailers draft decision

<https://www.esc.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/fixed-benefit-periods-notification-obligations-for-energy-retailers-draft-decision-20171117.pdf>

I strongly believe this does not go far enough. To provide maximum protection and choice for the customer to enable them switch to a new provider before being caught out with price hikes on their plans, then it must to apply to ALL Energy Plans and include advance notification (20-40 business days) of not just changes to the plan benefits (like pay on time discounts) but also any changes to the underlining plan rates (i.e. daily and usage charges).

In my own situation I signed up my energy (Gas and Electricity) to a new provider on 17/2/2017

My electricity was switched over until 4/3/17 but my gas did not get switched over until 29/3/2017

Since then I have had 2 sets of rate increases (while other plan benefits like pay on time discounts have not changed) on my both my Electricity and Gas plans on 1/7/2017 and the 1/10/2017. That is two price increases in the space of 3 months. For the same amount of usage, I have calculated my electricity rates have effectively gone up by over 35% and my gas rates by over 10% in that 3 month period. However no notification was given of the price rates changes until a bit of easily missed "small print" appeared on the next bill AFTER the date of the price change. In the case of the last rate change to my gas billing it was actually not until the second gas bill I received after 1/10/2017 that I was notified. I am in dispute with my provider about this and have earlier this month switched over my Gas and Electricity to a new provider. However for my Gas, I will not be able to switch until my next meter reading on 22/12/2017.

If I had had advance notice well before the price change took affect (i.e 20-40 business days) I would have been able to have enough time to find a new provider and switch over

well before being slugged with these rate price hikes. This is especially important for Gas services as the Meter Readings are only once every 2 months. Even with Electricity Billing, some customers are still on quarterly billing so may not know of any rate changes until up to 3 months later.

I also would expect a separate specific customer notification about energy plan changes sent by email/mail etc.. not something easily missed printed on the energy bill.

I would also like to see a limit to how often a Energy retailer can increase their rates for their existing plans in a 12 month period. Otherwise what is stopping them changing prices daily!!! How could consumers make informed choices/comparisons if the prices were to change as frequently as petrol prices!

regards,

John Dellios